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Conferences and Conventions: The $20 Billion Industry that Keeps America from Working

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Conferences and Conventions: The $20-Billion Industry That Keeps America From Working

by Walter Shapiro and Aleta Kaufman

I was reading *Fortune* magazine when I stumbled on the Rosetta Stone that explains the decline in American productivity. During the 1950s *Fortune* was the intellectual jewel of the then-glittering Luce magazine empire. But now *Life* is gone and *Time* is fading and *Fortune* regularly prints gushing profiles with titles like, "An Awesome Mind Is Fletcher Byrum's Secret Weapon." (Byrum is the chief executive of the Koppers Company, which, among other things, designs and builds the heavy industrial equipment used to make steel.) While skimming the Byrum profile in the July 1976 issue of *Fortune* I found the sentence that crystallized my feelings about American productivity:

"Byrum has delegated so much of his authority that he is able to spend nearly half his work days away from the office, tending to what he considers the external duties of the chief executive."

Think of it. Here is the head of an important industrial conglomerate delegating most of his work to junior executives, so he can spend his days going to meetings. As *Fortune* explained with unrestrained awe, "He has established a formidable record as a public speaker, making dozens of appearances a year before university students, civic groups, business organizations—and anyone else who will hear him out." Byrum clearly believes that it is more important to serve as the Elmer Gantry of capitalism than to run his own corporation.

Put yourself in the position of one of Byrum's subordinates to whom the real work of the Koppers Company is delegated. It's hard to keep your mind on third-quarter earnings reports while your boss is the center of attention at the late-morning cocktail hour at some corporate retreat like Hilton

Walter Shapiro is a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly. *Aleta Kaufman is an intern at* The Washington Monthly *who did much of the research for this article.*

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Head, South Carolina. It doesn't take too much business savvy to realize that you too can pass your work (and Byrum's work) along to subordinates and head for an almost-as-important conference in Key West. Pretty soon everyone in the company is out on the conference circuit except for two junior executives who have yet to get the message, the company janitor, and the legions of receptionists and secretaries who are needed to explain politely but firmly to all callers, "I'm terribly sorry, but Mr. Smith is out of town at a conference and won't be back in the office until next Monday."

To me, Fletcher Byrum's work life symbolizes the decline in American industrial greatness. If "I'm all right, Jack" is a bankrupt Britain, then Fletcher Byrum is America. From here it is just one short step to an all-encompassing theory of American productivity:

The lag in American productivity is directly related to the steady increase

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in the number of business conferences and conventions.

Let me cite as evidence a 1975 Associated Press story with the headline, "Conventions '75: Recession, Believe It or Not, Gives Industry a Boost." The article refers to a survey of 500 trade and professional associations that showed only 18 per cent suffered a decline in convention registration despite the precipitous downturn in the economy. The best explanation for this counter-cyclical development was given by a spokesman for the Las Vegas Convention Authority, who said, "Whenever we have any kind of crisis situation, economic or energy, it makes conventions much more important for people to attend because they can discuss their common problems."

The 1975 survey of the 500 trade associations was conducted by a Washington-based group called the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), which could be described as an association of associations. (ASAE is part of a trend that reached its culmination a few years ago with the publication of a *Newsletter on Newsletters*.) Jim Low, the president of ASAE, tends to see himself as a leading theoretician of American meetings and solemnly intones such meaningful homilies as "a meeting is the manifestation of the last result." He enthusiastically explains that the conference business has weathered every economic crisis in the last decade and just keeps on growing. "There is no Depression in the meeting business," he boasts. "If a businessman has a problem, he's got to meet and talk about it. Product liability is the hottest thing since OSHA [the Occupational Safety and Health Act]. From consumerism eight years ago to product liability today; it's never let up."

Reliable figures are hard to find; but it seems likely that Americans spend more than $20 billion annually on conferences and conventions. The International Association of Visitors and Convention Bureaus estimates that sponsoring organizations alone spent more than $3 billion in 1974 on their conventions. And this does not include the billions spent by individual delegates on travel, hotel accommodations, food, and entertainment. The ASAE produces figures of its own. It claims that associations held 45,000 conventions and exhibits in 1974, which attracted over 80 million delegates. The ASAE also figures that the typical delegate spends $250 while at a convention, excluding transportation. Taken as a package, these figures suggest that $20 billion might be a reasonable estimate for the gross national convention product.

America's Leading Industry

A visit to the Productivity Center, the permanent replacement for the federal Productivity Commission, did little to dispel the notion that conferences are America's leading industry. The Center's 1976 annual report does not discuss the relationship between the proliferation of conferences and the decline of American productivity, although it features an introduction by Nelson Rockefeller, who as Vice President should know something about non-productive employment. But what it does reveal is that the Productivity Center spends much of its time sponsoring conferences on the problems of American productivity. The annual report tells of "workshops" that it holds for "union leaders and management officials . . . in an atmosphere conducive to better understanding the value of cooperative endeavor." Such conducive environments include San Francisco, New York, and Seattle. In addition, the Productivity Center holds an annual convention; the most recent attracted 1,000 delegates to Washington's L'Enfant Plaza Hotel. The Center's director is also a much-sought-after speaker at business conferences and conventions.

The annual convention of the Productivity Center is planned by the secretary to the director. But for a

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growing number of organizations, convention planning is a task best left to professionals. Conference planning is one of the new occupational categories that will probably have to be recorded in the 1980 Census. Already, nestled in the Washington *Yellow Pages* between "Convalescent Homes" and "Convents and Monasteries," are three pages of entries under "Convention Services and Facilities." The background of firms in this area is diverse. Courtesy Associates, which handles a number of conferences for the government, began as a telephone answering service. Ted Driscoll—the founder of Ted Driscoll Associates—was formerly the sales manager of Washington's Shoreham Hotel. Gus Duda of Gus Duda Associates started his career while in the Air Force, running the annual "bash" held by the Air Force Sergeants Association.

Like those in most newly emerging professions, conference planners are deeply concerned about ways of restricting entry into the field. Generally, academic institutions are more than willing to help a new profession "professionalize" itself by setting up special degree programs. Unfortunately, colleges and universities have been somewhat laggard in seeing the opportunities presented by the rise of the convention planner. Although schools of hotel management at universities like Cornell, Michigan State, and the University of Washington are beginning to stress convention management, there is not yet a specialized degree program in this important area. As a result, the ASAE has been forced to step into the breach with a three-year study program that culminates in the awarding of a certificate in convention management. It goes without saying that the ASAE dreams of the day when only graduates of its program will be allowed to practice as convention planners.

The ASAE program, which consists of 10 six-hour courses, is taught during weekends at convention hotels like the Mark Hopkins in San Francisco and the Americana in New York. The classes run from nine to five with, of course, a cash bar open during the 90-minute lunch break. The syllabus provides some clues to the content of the modern convention. A key course is "Staging and Audio-Visual Techniques," which is designed to "emphasize ways to dramatize conventions, includes instructions on lighting, sound effects, script writing, using decorating firms, and illustrating theme." Another course, "Social Events and Food and Beverage Management," promises the attentive student that he will learn about "menu selection, creative presentation of food, illustrating and extending program theme, creating mood, food personnel, and party themes."

The Hottest Thing In the Field

The type of part-time "continuing education" that the ASAE uses to certify its convention managers is the hottest thing in the entire conference field. The emphasis on continuing education explains why the American Medical Association and its regional affiliates hold more meetings than any other organization in America. In a burst of reformist zeal, the AMA decreed in the early 1970s that all doctors must spend 55 hours a year on continuing education programs in order to maintain their licenses. Since there is money to be made from continuing education, the AMA structured its requirements so that it was much easier for doctors to get their 55 hours at AMA meetings than elsewhere. Other professional groups such as the American Psychological Association are seriously considering following the AMA's profitable lead in this area.

The government provides another major stimulus for conferences. Every new piece of regulatory legislation is a godsend for the conference industry, as meetings are immediately planned to explain the new regulations to the business community. Conference planners made fortunes from the Occupational Safety and Health Act and

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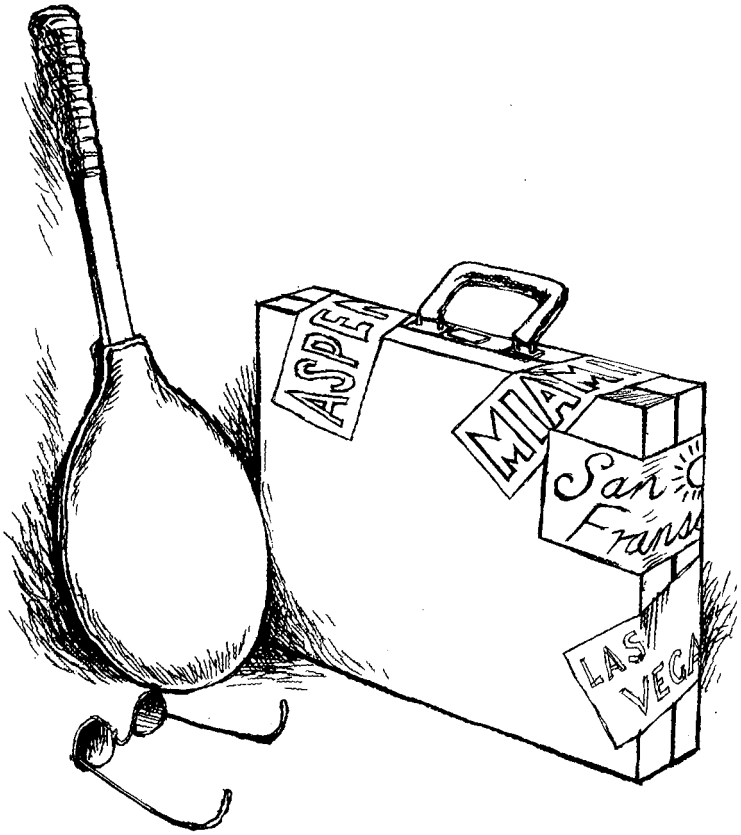

pension reform legislation. Combine the medical profession's penchant for conferences with the need to interpret complicated federal regulations, and one can only imagine the bonanza that national health insurance would mean for the conference industry.

Congress' continual tinkering with the tax code is another important source of revenue for conference planners. For example, the *New York Law Journal* sponsored conferences in December and January to acquaint lawyers, accountants and businessmen with the new changes in the income tax laws. (Ironically, one of the clauses in the 1976 tax bill limits deductions for attending conventions held outside the United States to two a year. The popularity of such far-flung conferences is suggested by the vehemence with which the business community and the conference industry are opposing these regulations. Jim Low of the ASAE confidently predicts that this law will be changed in 1977.)

'More Than Golf'

Just as every profession must have its certification process, it must also have its trade journal. In this case, it is a slick monthly called *Meetings and Conventions*. The magazine is mostly advertisements interspersed with bland editorial copy. The ads are blatant enough to convince even the most ardent skeptic that despite the rhetorical emphasis on continuing education, the main purpose of most business meetings is recreational. An advertisement on the back cover of last November's issue explains that there are "three major reasons to come to a Florida convention resort . . . . Golf. Tennis. And a giant beach warmed by the Florida sun." An appeal by the Spanish National Tourist Office proclaims, "The only problem with a convention in Spain is getting your people to come home." Then there is Pine Isle, which brags that a convention at this "luxurious new resort just 45 minutes from Atlanta" is "more than golf." It's also

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"swimming, tennis, riding, sailing, fishing, and relaxing in the sunshine." And what makes it even more appealing is that it is all tax deductible.

The service features that separate the advertisements in *Meetings and Conventions* convey the same message. A column called, "How to Speak Effectively in Public," begins with this advice: "If you want to be really effective as a public speaker, you'd better let your audience laugh while they listen." A discussion of trade shows warns exhibitors that most delegates "will spend no more than 10 to 20 per cent of their time at the show . . . ." Another feature by Sam Huff, former New York Giant football star who is now an executive with the Marriott Corporation, recommends that convention planners devote a half-day to what he calls a "Business Persons' Decathlon," with everything from bicycle races to putting contests.

The lead article in the November issue is a report on the second annual "Meeting on Meetings," which the magazine sponsored at Marriott's Lincolnshire Resort, just outside of Chicago. Not surprisingly, *Meetings and Conventions* calls it a "rousing success" thanks to a "spirited mix of informative presentations, sports celebrities, golf and tennis clinics and tournaments, social and dining events . . . ." When registering for the conference, delegates were asked if they wanted to participate in the golf or tennis tournaments and were required to list their handicaps. As an added incentive Sam Snead was on hand to play a hole with each golf foursome and Jack Kramer was available for tennis clinics. How traumatic it must be to be a business executive who is not a fanatic about either golf or tennis.

The "Meeting on Meetings" is a direct competitor to the ASAE's annual convention, which is also designed to unveil the newest concepts in meeting techniques. According to Jim Low of ASAE, new breakthroughs in convention planning are constantly needed to combat boredom: "Television has made it so that you can't keep an audience's attention by reading papers to them. That's why we're putting more pizzazz into meetings." During the 1960s, elaborate film and slide presentations were a favored method of enlivening conventions. But, Low explains, "Four-screen audiovisuals are now a thing of the past. They've gotten so common. We're looking ahead to laser beams and holograms."

Specialization Is Not Far Behind

Theatrics, rather than high technology, is the approach favored by many meeting planners. Low's favorite innovation in this area is the "trial, which we initiated at an ASAE convention a few years ago as a methodology for getting the involvement of members. We put the organization on trial—or an important concept on trial—with a judge and a prosecutor and with the audience as the jury. You have a whole stage set with the dock, the judge's bench, and the witness box that you can just fold up and crate around the country."

Once a new profession like conference planning establishes itself, specialization is not far behind. Neal Love of Wedgewood Productions designs convention programs. Or, as he puts it, "We bring the flair of the theater to what may otherwise be a dull business meeting. By packaging facts, by presenting them visually, by bombarding all the senses, by applying theatrical techniques, we get delegates to bring back from the convention facts that mean dollars and cents to them."

Love is a missionary who sees "education becoming more important. And conventions will be tne colleges of the masses." His role? "To make education palatable for the masses." Love, who looks like a younger version of Zero Mostel, is also a man of the theater. "I used to be on Ed Herlihy's 'Children's Hour,' he said, referring to a popular radio show of the 1940s and 1950s. "I like to

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write and produce shows. I've owned and operated dinner theaters." Sitting in Love's office at the American Bankers Association, one of his clients, it is easy to dwell on how far from the theater Love has come. But he seems to regard it as just one of life's compromises, a way of continuing to write and produce shows and still make the kind of living that the theater provides all too few.

The American Concrete Pipe Association's 1976 convention at the Del Coronado Hotel in San Diego was planned by Wedgewood Productions. The convention's theme was "We the People," and this was integrated into all the proceedings from beginning to end. "We wrote a whole new Preamble to the Constitution for the Concrete Pipe Association," Love says. "The opening session began with an actor dressed as Ben Franklin reading the Declaration of Independence and our special Preamble. Then Ben introduced the president of the Concrete Pipe Association with a three-screen presentation backed up by a 14-piece orchestra and six singers and dancers. It was an entertainment package built on education and designed to build pride in the concrete pipe industry."

The convention's opening cocktail party was entitled, "The Way We Were." On stage was an orchestra in 18th-century costumes, and each buffet table featured the indigenous foods of one of the original 13 colonies. The motif of "We Opened the West" was used for another cocktail party at the convention, and to get to it, guests had to clamber through a tunnel and endure a mock Indian raid. "Even the ladies' program was tied in to the 'We the People' theme," said Love. "The final dinner was called 'A Cause for Celebration.' We had a large replica of the Liberty Bell and small replicas on each table for delegates to take home as souvenirs. At the end of the convention it was time to look to the future. So we had them sing—and we wrote new words for it—'We've Only Just Begun.' "

Government-sponsored conferences are rarely as elaborate as the American Concrete Pipe Association's convention, but there are surprising similarities nonetheless. The accommodations are often far from spartan. For example, the Treasury Department and the Agency for International Development are known to favor the Coolfont Conference Center, located about two hours from Washington in Berkeley Springs, West Virginia. Coolfont is dominated by the Treetop House, which features a glass-walled restaurant and bar. Guests may stay in individual furnished cabins, or choose the more communal atmosphere of chalets nestled in the surrounding woods. Coolfont prides itself on its facilities for tennis, horseback riding, trout fishing, and swimming. A golf course and private airport are nearby.

Running government-sponsored conferences has become a big business for Washington consulting firms. Louise Lynch, the president of Courtesy Associates, estimates that she had

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to outbid 125 other firms for her last government contract. There is business enough to go around, however. Agencies such as the National Cancer Institute and the Energy Research and Development Administration believe that one of their major missions is to sponsor conferences.

Yet planning government-sponsored conferences presents special problems. One convention consultant, who requested anonymity, outlined some of them: "The government can't sponsor a cocktail party. They only pay a limited per diem for each delegate. And because of an archaic regulation, the Feds will not pay for public meeting space in most instances." To get around these restrictions, a convention planner must maneuver as carefully as a nursing home operator trying to cash his patients' social security checks. At the beginning of the conference, all delegates sign over their per diem allotments to the convention planner. These checks are then cashed, and part of the money is used to pay for such illicit activities as cocktail parties. These prohibited expenditures are hidden by extra surcharges added to the food and hotel bills.

In some ways it is as futile to rail against the excesses of the convention industry as it is to denounce the hoopla that surrounds the Super Bowl. The American hotel industry, for example, would be decimated if there were a significant decline in convention business. Washington's Madison Hotel, which once boasted "never a conference or a convention," found that such scruples guaranteed an annoyingly high vacancy rate. Conferences also perform an important contact function in American life. True, contacts of really top caliber—John Gardner or Robert McNamara—are unlikely to be at the American Concrete Pipe Association convention, but it is probable that the next Federal Highway Administrator was there in San Diego. American life is permeated with friendship or old-boy networks. And conferences—or any other ersatz activity that brings together people from all over the country—play a major role in fostering the connections that are a concomitant of success in modern America.

'The Little Guy from Oshkosh'

Perhaps the most important trend in conferences is their democratization. In years past, corporate presidents went to conferences while the average white-collar Charlie had to make do with getting drunk at the American Legion convention. While there are still Aspen Institutes and Airlie House symposia for the Fletcher Byrums, conferences have become universal. Perhaps the first signs of this trend should have been detected years ago, when the AFL-CIO started meeting in Bal Harbour, Florida, and the UAW built itself the Black Lake convention center on Mackinac Island in Upper Michigan. Conferences have become something that everyone in business can live for. The job may be meaningless, the work demeaning, and the chance for significance nil, but if you can just hang on to your sanity for six more weeks, there is always the National Wooden Pallet and Container Association convention (yes, there really is one) in Las Vegas.

The closing sermon on the American conference industry will be delivered by Neal Love of Wedgewood Productions:

"Conventions are not talking to the big people any more. They're talking to you and me. The man in the street, the little guy from Oshkosh, the little shop around the corner. Even the man in Goshen, New York, needs to be motivated. And conventions can provide the kind of motivation that man needs. We're not talking about motivating big shots. We're talking about people conventions weren't even interested in years ago. You don't have to be super-sophisticated when you're talking to people like this. Just sophisticated enough to get the message across." ■

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Why Jimmy Carter Doesn't Hire Jimmy Carters

by Charles Peters

An important point has been missed in the criticism of Jimmy Carter's cabinet and sub-cabinet choices. It is that Carter failed to take advantage of his unique knowledge of the able people out there in the part of America that is beyond the Northeast Network—the people from Iowa and Florida and Ohio who worked for him in his long campaign. He had spent almost two years traveling all over the country, getting to know his supporters by spending the night in their homes. I had thought this meant we might at last have a government that took advantage of the vast supply of talented people out in the provinces—the decent, intelligent, imaginative people who did not go to the right schools and had not become part of the Network. I had hoped Carter would realize that there were lots of people out there just like Jimmy Carter and Jody Powell, people who could hope to gain responsible positions in the national government only by participating in politics. They weren't going to be recommended by their fellow IBM or Rockefeller Foundation directors because the only boards they were on were Boise Cement's and Cedar Rapids Electric's.

The trouble with the Network is that most people in it, be they Republican or Democrat, conservative or liberal, don't really believe in democracy. They simply haven't had the experience to support such a belief. If you've gone to private schools and either been an officer or avoided military service, your actual experience with the people is rather slim. When distinguished columnists want to tell us what the people think, they talk to cab drivers, since they are the only ordinary people columnists come in contact with. Network people are elitists. If they can accept the idea that kids as bright as Huck and Tom

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are born in Hannibal, Missouri every day, they assume those kids will naturally go for a scholarship at Harvard or Yale, go on to live in places like Washington or New York, and become certified Network members.

One of the few sizable Network groups that has some idea of the talent out there is lawyers. A fair number of Washington and New York and Boston lawyers have to get out of the Corridor at one time or another to try a case in the boondocks. Assuming an easy victory is in the offing, they decide to relax and enjoy the trip, only to find—not always, but surprisingly often—some hayseed running rings around them. The truth behind this phenomenon is that while a Harvard Law School class, taken as a whole, is a good cut above a similar class at Ohio State, there will be very little difference between the top ten students at either school. But, while most of the Harvard ten will go to Network cities, most of the Ohio ten will stay in Ohio. They were the kind of people I had hoped Jimmy Carter would identify, but when I asked transition people if they had ever seen a talent search file with a note in it reading "Jimmy met this guy in Dayton and thought he was first-rate, let's find a place for him," the answer was no.

It's really a loss, and not only because there are a lot of people in the rest of America who are just as talented as those in the Network. The people out there also tend to be considerably saner than their Network counterparts. People who stayed in their home town with their family and friends have tempered their ambition with other, countervailing drives, and that tempering process gives them a stability and a range of human contact that are lacking in the people who left home to take a Harvard scholarship and then went on to Washington or New

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Diana H. Walker

Patricia Roberts Harris

York. It's odd that Carter and his wife seem to see the virtue of having roots for themselves but not in others.

The excuse that is always given for not venturing outside the Network is that even if there are fine people out there, they just lack expertise.

But that concern didn't stop Carter from announcing the appointment of Patricia Roberts "Two for One" Harris as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Expertise. There's absolutely nothing in Patricia Roberts Harris' background to suggest she knows anything about housing or urban development. Her most often cited credentials—ambassador to Luxemburg and dean of the Howard Law School—don't qualify her to do anything. The demands of the first job are such that it was filled satisfactorily by the late Perle Mesta, who achieved recognition as the hostess with the mostest. The Howard job was held by Mrs. Harris for only one month. Usually such short-term employment is not even listed on resumes.

If there is nothing in her background to suggest the expertise that is supposed to be lacking in people from the hinterlands, there is something in

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that background that demonstrates why it's such a terrible shame not to see fresh faces in Washington.

In January 1971, Mrs. Harris accepted an appointment as a member of the board of directors of the National Bank of Washington. At the time she accepted, she knew the bank was being used to defraud mine workers. Here's how the fraud worked:

The miners' union, the United Mine Workers of America, owned the bank. Income from the bank's dividends paid for the salaries and the expense accounts and the Cadillacs of the union's officials. Much of the bank's income, from which the dividends were paid, came from the miners' pension fund, which was deposited in a non-interest-bearing account. In other words, the pension fund, instead of earning income to pay pensions to aged and disabled miners, was being used to take care of union officials in the style to which they were accustomed.

Fourteen months before Mrs. Harris joined Tony Boyle on the board, Boyle had defeated Jock Yablonski for the presidency of the UMW in an election that was later overturned because of fraud. Ample evidence of that fraud had appeared in newspapers and magazines before Mrs. Harris joined Mr. Boyle at the board table. Mr. Boyle was, of course, later convicted of Yablonski's murder and is now in prison. At the time Mrs. Harris joined the bank board all that was known about the murder was that one of the gunmen was the son-in-law of a union leader who had strong connections with Tony Boyle, and that there was enough evidence on father and son-in-law to indict both of them. But as Edward Bennett Williams always says, as he is pocketing his $100,000 fee, every citizen is entitled to be presumed innocent. So forget about the murder, forget about the fraudulent elections. Just remember the interest-free pension account.

How do we know Mrs. Harris knew about it? We know because we wrote her a letter, pointing out the pension fraud and asked why she was joining the board. She didn't answer.

Mrs. Harris didn't resign from the board then, and she didn't resign three months later when a federal court found the bank liable to the pensioners for $11,000,000. She finally left the board in December 1971, not because she thought there was anything wrong with the bank but because she had been asked to join the board of Chase Manhattan.

Mrs. Harris was not alone on the National Bank's board during 1971. Here are some of the other directors: Clark Clifford, former Secretary of Defense; True Davis, president of the bank and former ambassador to Switzerland; Crosby Boyd, board chairman of *The Washington Star*; Liz Carpenter, former press secretary to Ladybird Johnson; Elwood R. Quesada, former director of the Federal Aviation Agency.

Now these are typical Washingtonians. Able—remember the job Mrs. Harris did on the Credentials Committee for the 1972 Democratic Convention? Charming—have you ever talked to Mr. Clifford or Mrs. Carpenter? They aren't consciously evil. They don't sit around wondering how best to exploit the masses. But they don't know the masses. They don't get upset at the theft of miners' pensions because they don't know any miners.

What we need in Washington is people who do know miners—miners and farmers and factory workers and small businessmen. We need people who couldn't bear to ignore the problems of their friends or to betray their interests.

This is not to say that there are no scoundrels in the non-Network world. There are plenty. But there are also plenty of good people who know their communities, who lead healthy, involved lives that bring them into contact with all classes, and who, simply because they aren't isolated like Network people, have some chance of caring about ordinary people and their problems. ■

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The White House Press: Let AP Cover the Assassinations

by Trudi Osborne

When Richard Nixon announced that he intended to visit Mainland China in 1972, a committee of the White House Correspondents Association called on Press Secretary Ron Ziegler and instructed him to "make it clear to the Chinese that when an American President travels, the American press travels with him." And so they do—in that instance a limited 155 of them, up from a maximum of 12 that the Chinese initially agreed to accommodate. Two thousand applied to go.

That trip was uncommon, but the practice of a huge White House press contingent trailing a President on his travels, like a court following a monarch to the castles of his and others' realms, is not. It is commonplace. It is of dubious value to both the press and the public, and one may doubt the sanity of the bosses of some 70 media men in footing a bill of, for instance, $1,725 air fare per man, plus $60 a day for a Paris hotel room, plus food and drink, to enable their own reporter to trail Gerald Ford to the Rambouillet economic conference in November 1975 in order to supply them with coverage above and beyond that of the wire services and networks.

That was not the most exorbitant of press trips, but it probably was the least useful of Ford's foreign forays, according to UPI's Richard Growald. "Not two guys there knew what the participants were talking about," he says.

UPI's Helen Thomas thought that

Trudi Osborne is a Washington writer.

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Nixon's last trip to Russia in July 1974 was the least useful presidential trip because, "He was dead. Finished. The Russians knew it. The trip meant nothing." It cost $2,371.50 per person for airfare and Intourist, and 165 to 170 went.

Some press accompanying the President is necessary, of course, but the absurdity of 50 to nearly 200 reporters, depending on the occasion, doggedly tagging after him at home and abroad—often to the consternation of nations that have difficulty accommodating them—is made all the more ludicrous by the logistics of such over-coverage.

Few in this well-subsidized swarm ever see the President or hear his voice any more directly than does the ordinary TV viewer. Indeed, some of the reporters who followed the 1976 presidential campaign debates around the country chose to watch them on TV in their hotel rooms. On many occasions, particularly fund-raising dinners, the traveling press, except for the press pool, is confined to a room quite apart from the proceedings, and must see and hear its leader on a TV set just like anyone else—except, of course, for the mnemonic aid of a transcript supplied to them in advance by the White House Press Office, from which they will construct their stories. What, one may ask, is unusual about the supplying of transcripts to the press? Nothing, of course, except that flying an escadrille of reporters from coast to coast to get a copy seems a little out of the ordinary.

In motorcades, a pool of about 12

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reporters and sound and camera men follow the President's car, but between it and them are cars carrying the Secret Service, the President's doctor, and ever-present communications personnel. Well behind and hopelessly beyond the range of visual perception, the main body of correspondents trundles along in a bus that is wired to receive a running commentary from the men in the pool. From this input and from observation of the crowds in the wake of the President's progress, and, of course, from the prepared fact sheets supplied them by the White House Press Office, the traveling reporters dateline and write firsthand stories that show their outfit's man was on the scene.

Trips to Xanadu

There are four kinds of presidential travel that the media share: the lusted-after foreign trips; domestic working trips, often characterized as the "death watch"; campaign trips; and "working vacation" trips to Xanadu-like pleasure spots.

When Richard Nixon began his peripatetic presidency, with its rotating occupancy of multiple White Houses, he set a new pattern of executive functioning. It made sense to want a favorable public reaction to the constant shifting from Washington to San Clemente to Key Biscayne to Camp David, so it made sense to help induce that reaction by treating the accompanying media well.

Presidents did not always absent themselves from the capital with the frequency of Mr. Nixon. From the time of his second inaugural in January 1973 until Thanksgiving of that year, the President spent only four weekends of 44 in the White House. Correspondingly, few weekends were spent in Washington by the regulars among the White House press corps, and so accustomed have they become to jetting about that they have difficulty recalling that—before they became conditioned to going wherever the President went, and before their publishers and producers became accustomed to paying for it—Ron Ziegler occasionally had to solicit them to sign up for the Nixon trips, hinting there might be real news on those usually bland runs.

Live news not only was scarce, it was rationed. On one occasion in California at a Ziegler briefing, when a reporter suggested a promising topic to the spokesman and asked if it "wasn't news?" Ziegler retorted, "Yes, but it won't be news tomorrow if I give it to you today."

Reporters beefed about being away from home on holidays, and found they were being encouraged to bring their families on the San Clemente and Key Biscayne trips at a minimal fare. Family travel was not new, nor were reduced rates for wives and children; that practice was begun under Johnson, though the Pedernales didn't draw much of a gate.

Under Truman, press fares were prorated, as required by law. Under Eisenhower (who normally was accompanied by only 15 regulars) and under Kennedy, family members were charged variously from normal commercial fare to nothing at all, for an occasional, infrequently sought ride. Before the Nixon Administration, few families went along on these vacation trips, according to Edwin "Jiggs" Fauver, former head of the White House Transportation Office. "Seldom, except at Christmas, did we have a wife go along," he says. "The family thing grew to the proportions it is now in the Nixon Administration . . . . That President wanted families to go."

Families loved the Xanadu trips; they made up a whole new group of enthusiasts for presidential travel. It was exciting, and it offered the good life aloft—where the best of food and drink was served, the latter in quantities so unlimited that some was always made off with—and on the ground, where inexpensive vacations awaited.

President Nixon visited delightful watering places, and individual round-fare trip on the press plane for wives

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UPI

President Ford and the press at Vail Mountain, Colorado

and children was only $75 to Key Biscayne and $150 to San Clemente (the latter price today obtains passage to Ford's resorts, Vail and Palm Springs). Travel costs for the newsmen—though they personally have to pay only for their families—rose above commercial fares to $400 for San Clemente and $200 for Key Biscayne. Today, their bosses pay $693.54 round trip per man to Palm Springs, whereas first-class commerical fare on TWA, for instance, is $564 and economy fare $354. It must be noted that the newsmen's costs include bus services that deliver them and their baggage, if they so choose, door-to-door from the White House to the hotel at their destination.

In June 1973, when Russia's Leonid Brezhnev visited President Nixon at his Casa Pacifica, the manifest of passengers aboard the chartered jetliner totaled 90 correspondents, photographers, and technicians; 25 spouses and 25 children, aged three to 19; plus an overflow of 15 Russian correspondents from the Russian plane. There also was a State Department plane and, in all, 400 news chroniclers—foreign and domestic, diplomatic, defense and general—went along.

Getting the reporters there is only one of the services performed by the White House Transportation Office, which not only charters their plane and buses, handles their baggage, and causes fleets of hired cars to materialize at their hotel, but also, with the help of the White House Press Office, sets up an equipped communications center and, when necessary, camera platforms. In addition, the office contracts for the reporters' hotel rooms and apartments. In Vail, where accommodation, by necessity, is mostly in condominiums (one bedroom, $85 to $90 per week; two bedrooms, $110 to $115 at this season), there usually is plenty of space, and families share their husbands' quarters literally for nothing. "It's a good deal," says a former high press office official, one

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Diana H. Walker

Ron Nessen

who has heard the press, in pre-Vail briefings, demand exacting answers as to how Ford was going to pay for his own accommodations.

Once, in a fit of pique, when they had given him a hard time about the gas bill for Air Force One at the beginning of the energy crisis, Richard Nixon told the press to get lost and flew to California commercially. Those who followed him had to do likewise, but the yelp that sounded at the temporary loss of their life style and their efficient baggage handlers was shrill and hostile.

"It is the handlers you miss most," said former Assistant Attorney General William Ruckelshaus when he left government service. And Gerald Ford, when Barbara Walters asked him what he would chiefly miss after leaving the White House, replied, "The conveniences."

The press likes them no less. Reporters find the ease of their charter flight infinitely preferable to the rigors of arranging individual transportation, and often the only practicable way to operate. There was, however, initially an obstacle. The Civil Aeronautics Board did not consider the media an affinity group, and except for individual waivers, such as those granted during the 1972 campaign, the chartered White House press flights were illegal per se. On February 11, 1974 the CAB issued a blanket waiver to parts 207 and 208 of its Economic Regulations to permit the newsmen to fly legally, their presence having been found to be in the public interest as protecting the American people's "right to know."

What was not waived was specified equal fare for dependents. The regulations further stipulate that anyone accompanying a correspondent must be an immediate member of his family and living in his household, and that has not always been observed. It is a story the White House press has yet to uncover.

The working vacation, or Xanadu trip, according to a former Deputy Press Secretary, "In a way is a monster that everybody has helped to create and nobody knows how to handle . . . . In a sense, we and the press forced this onto each other. Because we want to picture the President as never letting go the reins of government, we abet the illusion that the vacation trips are really part-time working trips, and that is true. We're not manufacturing that . . . . The press corps really is required to staff those trips. Now, there's some question as to how *much* staffing is necessary . . . . They know it's going to be a soft trip, on the expense account, and it results in a too-large press corps making too much of insignificant items. Things get blown way out of proportion." Ron Nessen says, "It drives reporters to write stories that are not justified by the news."

President Ford's first vacation in Vail in the summer of 1975 was meant basically to be a vacation, according to a press official who did not go along: "We tried to discourage too much press from going. We tried

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to the point of saying we wouldn't even brief there; that information would be made available only in Washington. The howls were so great, we ended up briefing in Vail." Media employers ended up paying $1,100.96 travel costs per person for 60 newsgatherers, who were accompanied by 21 spouses and 36 offspring.

On Ford's last trip to Vail as President this past Christmas, he was accompanied by one of the smallest media contingents in memory. There were only 44 of them, but they brought along 26 spouses and 44 children, aged eight months to 17 years. Once again the White House press office tried to discourage a large press contingent. At his December 16 briefing, Nessen said, "I do not plan to have any briefings [in Vail] unless something develops." He, in fact, returned to Washington after Christmas and in advance of the press, which wrote reams about the lack of snow, a power failure hampering Ford's viewing of a football game on TV, and the Ute Indians dancing, and tried to make (despite admonitions by Ford) a major issue of the revival of the amnesty issue after Ford promised in his condolences to the bereaved Mrs. Philip Hart that he would "take a look at it." Charles B. Seib, ombudsman of *The Washington Post*, whose White House correspondent, with three dependents, was in Vail hustling stories, deplored the amnesty revival and the *Post*'s play of it as the top page-one story that day. He called it "wildly inflated . . . overkill." The media managed to fill a lot of space and time slots, graphically validating Dick Growald of UPI's assertion that "if individual papers go to the expense of sending their guy, you can be pretty sure they will print him. The bigger the flying corps, the bigger the reading audience will be—and that's our job, to inform."

The following exchange at the Friday, August 15, 1975 briefing at Vail demonstrates the magnitude of some persistently pursued stories:

Q: On the golf course today Dr. Lukash was spotted putting something on the President's hand. Has he got a blister or something from playing too much golf, or a bandaid, maybe?

Nessen: I don't know. He may.

Q: Will you find out?

Nessen: Yes.

Much Ado About No News

On Ford's post-election trip to Palm Springs, on which he was accompanied by 56 newsgatherers, in turn accompanied by 14 wives and 14 children aged five weeks to 17 years, there was no news, according to the AP's Fran Lewin. Reporters managed to find some fodder, however, in the portentous fact that upon Ford's arrival at the airport, the band failed to play "Hail to the Chief," and played instead "On a Clear Day You Can See Forever." There was much ado about his looking for a possible homesite in the area and a lot of complaining about a local TV station, owned by

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one of Ford's golfing partners, being allowed to film the foursome teeing off while the national press was not. All of it fell into the same category as the media's hotly pressed "right to know" about Amy Carter's Halloween costume and Rosalynn's Thanksgiving cranberry sauce.

Why bother? Because all journalists know that news *happens*, and if you are not there you won't see it happen. That, perhaps more than anything else, prompts hordes of reporters, with the acquiescence of their editors, to follow the President on his domestic working trips. They are, as they put it, afraid that he will get shot and they won't be there to see it.

Foreign Cultures

Whether or not they justify the expense, the press trips abroad have to be seen through another prism. Some of them are passports to isolated places. Their value, says Dick Growald, "is not so much in covering the President as in exposing foreign cultures . . . . We are prisoners of our cliches, and going to some countries is like going to the moon. Why, we saw Vladivostok! We learned that there was a completely Russian city in Asia. I saw only one Asiatic face . . . . We went to Romania and learned that there was a measure of real prosperity there . . . . The way the crowds were handled in Korea taught us something."

The most valuable trip in that regard was unquestionably Nixon's China trip in February 1972. There was no hard news until the Shanghai communique at trip's end. "We were told before we left there wouldn't be," says Fay Wells of Storer Broadcasting. "It was a TV spectacular . . . . People wanted to go for the distinction of being included." The lack of hard news produced one of the trip's best results. Forced into feature writing and filming, the press corps gave Americans a rewarding glimpse of China and life in it, a view lost to us since the descent of the Bamboo Curtain a quarter of a century ago.

Not all foreign trips, however, are to veiled and mysterious places, and not all reporters are of the quality of Dick Growald. Not all on Nixon's China trip were even newsgatherers. Of the President's 155-member media entourage, 87 were correspondents of one kind or another, 68 were labeled technical, and some of them were corporate executives (two of whom, at the last minute, bumped a CBS sound man and an ABC camera man).

For the distinction of being included (and the White House became the object of frothing hatred for its acts of necessary but willful exclusion), media bosses fought to pay (at pre-inflation prices) $2,345.12 per reporter in travel costs, or nearly $12,000 for a five-member broadcasting "standupper" team, consisting of one correspondent, one film man, one sound man, one lighting man, and one producer.

When Gerald Ford visited China and the Pacific Basin in December 1975, it cost $3,567.73 per person to ride the press plane, and $2,971.58 when he went to Helsinki. Possibly his most expensive domestic trip was the one immediately preceding the 1976 election. Media travel on two planes cost $2,700.95 per person. Normally, domestic trips are nearer $700-800.*

Glimpses and Impressions

In fairness, it must be said of traveling coverage that even on the Xanadu trips, there sometimes are opportunities to see high administration officials who have accompanied the President. These men are more accessible on the vacation trips, and the conditions for meeting them are easier. Further, the kind of glimpses and impressions that are particularly valued by magazines and television are

*The White House Transportation Office says costs for planes tend to run seven to ten dollars per mile, but they are variable because they must take into account the type of plane, where it comes from, how long it has to wait, etc.

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Memo of the Month

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS AIR FORCE LOGISTICS COMMAND
WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, OHIO 45433

REPLY TO ATTN OF: MMWC

SUBJECT: SAC/Plattsburg C/R B3264-0140/C3271-1630/D3289-3687, FSN 8820-188-3880, Dog Patrol, Explosive (Your ltr, 17 Oct 73)

TO: WRAMA/MMSEB

1. Recommend clarification of the Plattsburg request, the FSNs used, WRAMA's comments, and FSNs in the TA.

2. There will be a tendency towards confusion unless more or more explicit information is given. AFLC cannot identify any FSN to Dog Detection - Explosive or as WRAMA puts it in 17 Oct 73 letter, Patrol Dog/Explosive. We cannot determine whether they want a dog or an explosive. TA 538 lists FSN 8820-435-9005 as a Dog-Patrol which may be an animal to ferret out narcotics or explosives.

3. Plattsburg started out with a request for FSN 8820-243-7542 which is related to narcotics (a/w 538C) not explosives. The FSN was supplanted with 8820-188-3880. TA 538 and TA 002 list 8820-128-2880. Was there an error? Is 188-3880 a new number? Is 188-3880 a dog to sniff out explosives? Also what does Plattsburg really want: Dog-Explosive or Dog-Narcotics? Why has an exchange been offered in your 17 Oct letter?

4. Please review this whole thing for AFLC. Clarification is in order and a change to TA 538 for better identification seems in order.

FOR THE COMMANDER

Charles K. Pickell

CHARLES K. PICKELL
Aerospace Equipment Division
Office of DCS/Materiel Management

AFLC — Lifeline of the Aerospace Team

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more readily available. Just being there sometimes stimulates a correspondent's work, just as seeing a real ball game stimulates to a greater degree than seeing one on TV. Mass coverage does insure wider dissemination of news—or trivia, as the case may be—and finally the media's audience does sometimes benefit from its perceptions and presence on the scene.

Of course the media must accompany the President, but how often and under what circumstances? With little exception, the Xanadu trips are of low news yield, and they put the reporters' objectivity in jeopardy. Newsmen are in the business of throwing stones, and they cannot afford to live in glass houses. In the same week that Nessen failed to discourage a big press invasion of Vail by advising that he would not brief while there, he also announced that arrangements were being made to entertain the correspondents' 70 dependents with a tour of the Ford Motor Museum during a stopover in Ann Arbor, Michigan—and he had to field questions about lame duck Secretary of the Navy William Middendorf taking a $62,500 trip to the Antarctic and Pearl Harbor. Earlier that same month, the press made much of Secretary of the Treasury William Simon taking a party of 42 (25 of them Secret Service) on a special plane to Russia. Who has the right to blow the whistle on whom?

The assistances and services (not to mention favors) that the White House press corps receives from the White House Press Office are such that the necessity of their reduction sprang instantly to the mind of outgoing Staff Chief Richard Cheney when he was asked about President Carter's goal of cutting the White House staff from 485 to 250. "You're going to have to give up certain kinds of services," he said. "You might reduce the Press Office staff, but that in turn would reduce the amount of information that is made available to the press . . . [you might] quit doing verbatim transcripts of briefings and not do the kind of work that's now being done on behalf of the press corps. . . ." He might have mentioned, too, the elaborate loose-leaf notebook called "The Bible" that is distributed on all foreign trips, with maps handsome enough to frame and information of every kind, plentiful enough to be a course in the subject. And then there is the courtesy of transporting some of the media's baggage in the holds of the inspection-free cargo planes returning from abroad.

The press and the White House should be in an adversary relationship, though not necessarily a hostile one. Who is to say what lulls an adversary? Lobbyists, who know something about it, say dependence and favors.

'The Real Reasons Are Less Noble'

Meanwhile, the show goes on. A less than enchanted wing of the Lafayette Square Escadrille, temporarily grounded in Georgia, made its stakeout on the night of December 13 outside the Governor's mansion in Atlanta, where Jimmy Carter was interviewing prospects to serve in his administration.

CBS's Bob Schieffer, in a standupper, jestingly asked an AP man, "Why are you here?"

"Oh, because it's cold, and they generally like me to be in cold climates."

Schieffer asked the *New York Daily News*' man, "Do you expect to get any news out here?"

"I don't expect to get a thing, but if somebody should happen to blow up the building, I'll be here and my job will be saved."

Schieffer turned full face to the camera and said, "So why are all these grown people standing around out here? You could say it's in pursuit of a story . . . and a trained newsman sees no obstacle too steep, considers no odds too long. . . . You could say that, but the real reasons are less noble. The real reason we're all out here is because we're afraid to leave as long as our competition is here." ■

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Tidbits and Outrages

Abzug Cited For Quiet, Effective Leadership

Cynics attribute the proliferation of subcommittees on Capitol Hill to the opportunities for publicity they give to their chairmen. While we are usually of the "motives are complex" school, we have come across some news releases from the Subcommittee on Government Information and Individual Rights of the 94th Congress that do not destroy the cynics' case. Here are their titles:

CIA Director Bush Informs Abzug CIA Files to be Purged

Abzug Asks Disclosure of Special Prosecutor Files

Abzug Raps Credit Data Abuses

Abzug Charges CIA Misled Mail Intercept Victims: Discloses CIA "Discovery" of New Data on Mail Surveillance

Abzug Denounces CIA Intent to Destroy Files

Abzug Panel Directs State Department to Bar Race, Religion Questions in Foreign Visas

Abzug Panel Reveals Wide Civil Service Use of "Subversive" Files

Abzug Panel Reveals N.Y. Phone Co. Gives Private Unlisted Numbers to 47 Government Agencies, From IRS to Taxi Commission

Abzug Panel Discloses Interception of U.S. Cables by British

Abzug Releases Justice Department Report on Cointelpro Notification Effort

Bacon Longa, Vita Brevis

In our October issue, Dr. Ronald Glasser pointed out that bacon can cause cancer. Now comes this comforting report from Marion Burros of *The Washington Post*:

"The Department of Agriculture's Expert Panel on Nitrites and Nitrosamines has just decided that since the levels of the potent cancer-causing nitrosamines found in fried bacon cannot be reduced any lower by present methods, the current levels will be declared 'safe.' "

Reliable Sources

Cato, who writes "Letter from Washington" for *The National Review*, gave his December 10 readers such inside exclusives as "There is also talk in the Carter camp of keeping on Transportation Secretary William Coleman", and the news that HEW Secretary David Matthews' "successor has already been chosen. Sources in the Carter camp say it will be Leonard Woodcock."

Why Pay More?

Last month, in response to the campaign for higher federal salaries, we pointed out how low the resignation rate is in the civil service as evidence that people are not leaving in droves for higher paying jobs in the private sector. Now comes evidence from Kathy Sawyer of *The Washington Post* that the present federal salaries not only don't look so bad to those inside the civil service, but strike outsiders as a pretty good thing, too: "In the Washington area," she reports, "there are 65,000 applicants for 2,000 career jobs"—an applicant-to-opening ratio of more than 30 to 1.

Washington Story

For years Washingtonians have been moving to the suburbs to get away from the District's public schools. But all of a sudden, reports Lawrence W. Feinberg in *The Washington Post*,

"Stevens Elementary, until recently an obscure old public school in downtown Washington, has had a surge of applicants since President-elect Jimmy Carter announced his 9-year-old daughter Amy will attend the school's fourth grade.

"About 10 to 15 parents a day have been telephoning the school, says principal Lydia Williams, asking how they can get their children into Stevens. The callers include many people who live in the suburbs, she said, who say they are willing to pay tuition ($1,117 a year) to get their children into the school."

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What We're About

Nearly 60 years ago Sherwood Anderson set out to write his version of the American success story. It was a novel called *Poor White*, set in the Midwest in the late 1800s and concerned with the rise of the appropriate American heroic figure of the time, an inventor. Appropriate, because no one better embodied the vague but near-unanimous national striving of the time, a striving that took hold of the novel's small Ohio town like this:

"The youth and optimistic spirit of the country led it to take hold of the hand of the giant, industrialism, and lead him laughing into the land. The cry, 'Get on in the world,' that ran all over America at that period and that still echoes in the pages of American newspapers and magazines, rang in the streets of Bidwell."

Anderson's perspicacity is not particularly astounding, since he had had 25 years to digest and sum up the time he was writing about, but he was writing too about the national mood in his own time. Even with industrialism firmly in place, America still sought out industrial heroes, or heroes representing the idea of progress: if not the industrialists, then certainly inventors like Edison and Burbank and explorers like Byrd and Lindbergh. A new world was being created and to be a part of its creation, to do something nobody else has ever done, was the noblest sort of success.

Today we're still living in that new world, only it's grown old and sluggish. It's not that everything that needs doing has been done, but that because of the domination of the huge organizations that sprang up in the early 1900s and the end of hereditary privilege, everyone's energies are exhausted in the arduous process of finding an institutional place in America. A *Poor White* about the 1970s would not be the story of an innovator; instead, it might follow its hero's rise from obscurity to membership on the Council on Foreign Relations, or perhaps a regular table at Elaine's. America today is no longer a nation where success means *doing* something new. It means filling some already

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existing role, *being* somebody important, living the life a successful person would lead.

The most obvious manifestation of the decline of doing, and the one *The Washington Monthly* has written about most often, is the growth of bureaucracies in government and elsewhere that are primarily concerned with self-perpetuation and not with performing whatever function they are supposed to perform. The set of motivations bureaucracy spawns—survival, expansion, caution—are the prime shapers of what organizations do. The case for the importance of bureaucracy in the 20th century can best be made by looking at how it has become the dominant problem in countries that have undergone huge ideological shifts; it's clear that the real enemy isn't capitalism or communism. Russian officials worry not about how to stop the profit motive, but about why nothing works. Mao Tse-tung went to his deathbed worrying not about spreading the wealth, but about curbing the government bureaucracy.

But if the desire to *be* rather than to *do* manifests itself in the growth of bureaucracy, it also spreads wider. The impulses that drive bureaucrats are closely akin to those driving successful non-bureaucrats, too, which is to say that the culture in which people live, their setting, is a greater determinant of how they behave than are their stated beliefs or their supposed functions. America is, after much praiseworthy effort, largely a meritocracy now, but the meritocrats are chiefly oriented toward gathering a series of well-defined rewards that have little to do with what America needs. Even the most talented and imaginative people often devote their energies to achieving a string of accolades and titles, the accoutrements of success, rather than to doing something in particular.

The end point of this comes when all the A students and National Merit Scholars finally arrive at the positions of power for which they've been groomed for so long, and concern

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themselves with living the life that powerful people in America are supposed to live. They revel in the privileges and associations that go along with success, since these after all have been their goals, and if they think about the wise exercise of their power, they tend to do so mostly as it affects the attainment of those rewards.

Thus congressmen will devote great energy to getting their constituents' social security checks delivered because that will help them get reelected and continue to live the life, but they won't worry about why social security checks get screwed up in the first place, because that won't. Thus lobbyists achieve their greatest success by bringing to life legislators' fantasies of the good, upper-class life that is slightly out of their grasp. Thus many of our best writers are so concerned about staying in their own volatile, putdown-prone setting that they can't think much about the rest of America—and the values of that setting are such that they wouldn't have a very high opinion of the rest of America even if they did.

The pull of rewards, rather than doing, affects everybody who helps control our society, from the GS-13 in the Department of Agriculture who won't speak out against a bad policy to the senator who trims his opinions so they won't take away the warm hellos he gets in the Senate dining room. It means, obviously, that the doing that needs to be done in America—solving the problems of health care or pollution or poverty—is not uppermost in the minds of most of the people who are running the country. The meritocratic upper class is so oriented toward life in its own culture that it's widely separated from everyone who is not part of that culture—most of America, that is. The result is that despite the fairness with which access to it is granted, the American upper class behaves a good deal like upper classes anywhere, at any time: like aristocrats.

There's no better example of this than the first article in the collection that follows, James Fallows' description of the college-student elite's behavior during the Vietnam war draft. The students, opposed to the war, escaped fighting in it for what seemed to them to be ideological reasons, while letting the less-smart and less-rich go off to die and keep the war going. The sins of the age of being aren't all so egregious, but they're worth looking at, and this collection tries in various ways to do that, by way of celebrating our eighth anniversary, a birthday important in the political world (where the years come in fours) to which we belong. All these articles seek not to condemn, but to understand how the dynamics of meritocracy and reward-seeking work; calling people war criminals and leaving it at that doesn't shed any light on the motivation behind their crimes or how that motivation might be altered. For eight years it's been our conviction that without that kind of understanding, nothing can change.

The Editors

The answers to the January puzzle:

I	N	A	U	G	U	R	A	T	I	O	N	D	A	Y
N		W		E		E		H		U		E		E
C	H	A	I	R	E	D		R	O	T	U	N	D	A
L		I		M		U		E		W		I		R
U	L	T	R	A		C	L	E	V	E	R	M	A	N
D				N		T		L		S				E
E	X	P	R	E	S	I	D	E	N	T	F	O	R	D
		E				O		G				V		
W	I	N	S	T	O	N		S	H	A	V	E	R	S
I		I		R						M		R		E
R	E	T	A	I	N	E	R	S		E	G	R	E	T
E		E		P		E		T		R		E		T
T	E	N	F	O	U	R		A	B	I	G	A	I	L
A		C		L		I		R		C		C		E
P	R	E	S	I	D	E	N	T	C	A	R	T	E	R

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What Did You Do in the Class War, Daddy?

by James Fallows

Many people think that the worst scars of the war years have healed. I don't. Vietnam has left us with a heritage rich in possibilities for class warfare, and I would like to start telling about it with this story:

In the fall of 1969, I was beginning my final year in college. As the months went by, the rock on which I had unthinkingly anchored my hopes—the certainty that the war in Vietnam would be over before I could possibly fight—began to crumble. It shattered altogether on Thanksgiving weekend, when, while riding back to Boston from a visit with my relatives, I heard that the draft lottery had been held and my birthdate had come up number 45. I recognized for the first time that, inflexibly, I must either be drafted or consciously find a way to prevent it.

In the atmosphere of that time, each possible choice came equipped with barbs. To answer the call was unthinkable, not only because, in my heart, I was desperately afraid of being killed, but also because, among my friends, it was axiomatic that one should not be "complicit" in the immoral war effort. Draft resistance, the course chosen by a few noble heroes of the movement, meant going to prison or leaving the country. With much the same intensity with which I wanted to stay alive, I did not want those things either. What I wanted was to go to graduate school, get married, and to enjoy those bright prospects I had been taught that life owed me.

I learned quickly enough that there was only one way to get what I wanted. A physical deferment would restore things to the happy state I had known during four undergraduate years. The barbed alternatives would be put off. By the impartial dictates of public policy I would be free to pursue the better side of life.

Like many of my friends whose numbers had come up wrong in the lottery, I set about securing my salvation. When I was not participating in anti-war rallies, I was poring over the Army's code of physical regulations. During the winter and early spring, seminars were held in the college common rooms. There, sympathetic medical students helped us search for disqualifying conditions that we, in our many years of good health, might have overlooked. Although, on the doctors' advice, I made a half-hearted try at fainting spells, my only real possibility was beating the height and

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weight regulations. My normal weight was close to the cut-off point for an "underweight" disqualification, and, with a diligence born of panic, I made sure I would have a margin. I was six-feet-one-inch tall at the time. On the morning of the draft physical I weighed 120 pounds.

Before sunrise that morning I rode the subway to the Cambridge city hall, where we had been told to gather for shipment to the examination at the Boston Navy Yard. The examinations were administered on a rotating basis, one to two days each month for each of the draft boards in the area. Virtually everyone who showed up on Cambridge day at the Navy Yard was a student from Harvard or MIT.

There was no mistaking the political temperament of our group. Many of my friends wore red arm bands and stop-the-war buttons. Most chanted the familiar words, "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh/NLF is Gonna Win." One of the things we had learned from the draft counselors was that disruptive behavior at the examination was a worthwhile political goal, not only because it obstructed the smooth operation of the criminal war machine, but also because it might impress the examiners with our undesirable character traits. As we climbed into the buses and as they rolled toward the Navy Yard, about half of the young men brought the chants to a crescendo. The rest of us sat rigid and silent, clutching x-rays and letters from our doctors at home.

Inside the Navy Yard, we were first confronted by a young sergeant from Long Beach, a former surfer boy no older than the rest of us and seemingly unaware that he had an unusual situation on his hands. He started reading out instructions for the intelligence tests when he was hooted down. He went out to collect his lieutenant, who clearly had been through a Cambridge day before. "We've got all the time in the world," he said, and let the chanting go on for two or three minutes. "When we're finished with you, you can go, and not a minute before."

From that point on the disruption became more purposeful and individual, largely confined to those whose deferment strategies were based on anti-authoritarian psychiatric traits. Twice I saw students walk up to young orderlies—whose hands were extended to receive the required cup of urine—and throw the vial in the orderlies' faces. The orderlies looked up, initially more astonished than angry, and went back to towel themselves off. Most of the rest of us trod quietly through the paces, waiting for the moment of confrontation when the final examiner would give his verdict. I had stepped on the scales at the very beginning of the examination. Desperate at seeing the orderly write down 122 pounds, I hopped back on and made sure that he lowered it to 120. I walked in a trance through the rest of the examination, until the final meeting with the fatherly physician who ruled on marginal cases such as mine. I stood there in socks and underwear, arms wrapped around me in the chilly building. I knew as I looked at the doctor's face that he understood exactly what I was doing.

"Have you ever contemplated suicide?" he asked after he finished looking over my chart. My eyes darted up to his. "Oh, suicide—yes, I've been feeling very unstable and unreliable recently." He looked at me, staring until I returned my eyes to the ground. He wrote "unqualified" on my folder, turned on his heels, and left. I was overcome by a wave of relief, which for the first time revealed to me how great my terror had been, and by the beginning of the sense of

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'To answer the call was unthinkable, not only because, in my heart, I was desperately afraid of being killed, but also because, among my friends, it was axiomatic that one should not be "complicit" in the immoral war effort.'

shame that remains with me to this day.

It was, initially, a generalized shame at having gotten away with my deception, but it came into sharper focus later in the day. Even as the last of the Cambridge contingent was throwing its urine and deliberately failing its color-blindness tests, buses from the next draft board began to arrive. These bore the boys from Chelsea, thick, dark-haired young men, the white proles of Boston. Most of them were younger than us, since they had just left high school, and it had clearly never occurred to them that there might be a way around the draft. They walked through the examination lines like so many cattle off to slaughter. I tried to avoid noticing, but the results were inescapable. While perhaps four out of five of my friends from Harvard were being deferred, just the opposite was happening to the Chelsea boys.

We returned to Cambridge that afternoon, not in government buses but as free individuals, liberated and victorious. The talk was high-spirited, but there was something close to the surface that none of us wanted to mention. We knew now who would be killed.

The Thinking-Man's Route

As other memories of the war years have faded, it is that day in the Navy Yard that will not leave my mind. The answers to the other grand questions about the war have become familiar as any catechism. Q. What were America's sins? A. The Arrogance of Power, the Isolation of the Presidency, the Burden of Colonialism, and the Failure of Technological Warfare. In the abstract, at least, we have learned those lessons. For better or worse, it will be years before we again cheer a President who talks about paying any price and bearing any burden to prop up some spurious overseas version of democracy.

We have not, however, learned the lesson of the day at the Navy Yard, or the thousands of similar scenes all across the country through all the years of the war. Five years later, two questions have yet to be faced, let alone answered. The first is why, when so many of the bright young college men opposed the war, so few were willing to resist the draft, rather than simply evade it. The second is why all the well-educated, presumably humane young men, whether they opposed the war or were thinking fondly of A-bombs on Hanoi, so willingly took advantage of this most brutal form of class discrimination—what it signifies that we let the boys from Chelsea be sent off to die.

The "we" that I refer to are the mainly white, mainly well-educated children of mainly comfortable parents, who are now mainly embarked on promising careers in law, medicine, business, academics. What makes them a class is that they all avoided the draft by taking one of the thinking-man's routes to escape. These included the physical deferment, by far the smartest and least painful of all; the long technical appeals through the legal jungles of the Selective Service System; the more disingenuous resorts to conscientious objector status; and, one degree further down the scale of personal inconvenience, joining the Reserves or the National Guard. I am not talking about those who, on the one hand, submitted to the draft and

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took their chances in the trenches, nor, on the other hand, those who paid the price of formal draft resistance or exile.

That there is such a class, identifiable as "we," was brought home to me by comparing the very different fates of the different sorts of people I had known in high school and college. Hundreds from my high school were drafted, and nearly two dozen killed. When I look at the memorial roll of names I find that I recognize very few, for they were mainly the anonymous Mexican-Americans (as they were called at the time) and poor whites I barely knew in high school and forgot altogether when I left. Several people from my high school left the country; one that I know of went to jail. By comparison, of two or three hundred acquaintances from college and afterwards, I can think of only three who actually fought in Vietnam. Another dozen or so served in safer precincts of the military, and perhaps five went through the ordeal of formal resistance. The rest of us escaped, in one way or another.

The fifth anniversary report of my class at Harvard gives a more precise idea of who did what. There were about 1,200 people in the class, and slightly fewer than half wrote in to report on what had happened to them since 1970. Of that number, 12 said that they had been in the Army, two specifying that they had served in Vietnam. One had been in the Marine reserves. Another 32 people, most of whom had held ROTC scholarships in college, had put in time with the Navy. Two were in the Coast Guard, two in the National Guard, and seven more in unspecified branches of the military. That was the bite the military took from half my class at Harvard during a bloody year of the war—56 people, most of them far from the fighting. Besides them, seven of my classmates performed alternate service as conscientious objectors; and, though no one reported going to prison, one wrote from England that he was a "draft resister; beat the rap on a legal technicality," and another that he had "several years of legal entanglement with the draft and the Justice Department."

A few of the personal reports are worth quoting for what they tell about the way the burden of the war fell on the men of Harvard. Here are two from people who felt the pinch:

"Number four in the draft lottery sparked my idealism, and I entered the Peace Corps following graduation. After eighteen or so peaceful and mostly enjoyable months in and around a peasant village in Senegal, West Africa, I returned home and ended up in the jungles of Harvard Law School. . . ."

"I got a lucky draft, number 13. That was good for six months in the Reserves. There I got in-depth training on how to be a 'Petroleum Supply Storage Specialist,' i.e., a service station attendant. But the six months was put to good use by the Nixon Administration; that is how long it took to get me a security clearance for

'As long as the little gold stars kept going to homes in Chelsea and the backwoods of West Virginia, the mothers of Chevy Chase and Great Neck were not on the telephones to their congressmen screaming you killed my boy.

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a job in the Executive Office. Six months after my arrival there, the Wage Price Control Program was hatched, and the next three years were spent diverting public attention from other matters that were attracting that attention. With a briefcase of anecdotes, I decided to divert my attention back to my studies in economics at Wisconsin."

Meanwhile, those who did not go were preparing themselves, each by his own lights, for their contributions to the world:

"My wife and I graduated from Harvard Law School in 1973 and we are both working for New York City firms. She is associated with Cravath, Swaine, and Moore, and I am with Davis, Polk, & Wardwell."

"With four unpleasant medical school years behind me, I am enjoying Philadelphia and internship. I hope to deliver babies on Maui someday."

"After the usual three-year stint (at Columbia) I find myself in the unusual position of practicing law in the entertainment field. Clients include Norman Lear, Burt Reynolds, Ryan O'Neal, Valerie Perrine, et al., as well as a number of 'struggling young artists'—the latter *pro bono*, of course. . . ."

"Am practicing corporate law (mostly tax), working fairly hard, enjoying my schizophrenic law firm/Berkeley hippy life very much. . . ."

At a minimum, the record of my class should help Midge Decter over her fears that the people of my generation have somehow strayed from the straight and narrow path. More than that, it does sum up the home front's story of the war: we happy few were sped along to Maui or the entertainment law firm, or at worst temporarily way-laid in the reserves, while from each of our high schools the less gifted and industrious students were being shipped off as cannon fodder. There are those who contend that the world has always worked this way, and perhaps that is true. The question is why, especially in the atmosphere of the late sixties, people with any presumptions to character could have let it go on.

Learning From Lyndon

First we should consider the conduct of those who opposed the war. Not everyone at Harvard felt that way, nor, I suspect, did even a majority of the people throughout the country who found painless ways to escape the draft. But I did, and most of the people I knew did, and so did the hordes we always ran into at the anti-war rallies. Yet most of us managed without difficulty to stay out of jail. The tonier sorts of anti-war literature contained grace-note references to Gandhi and Thoreau—no CO application would have been complete without them—but the practical model for our wartime conduct was our enemy LBJ, who weaseled away from the front lines during World War II.

It may be worth emphasizing why our failure to resist induction is such an important issue. Five years after Cambodia and Kent State, it is clear how the war could have lasted so long. Johnson and Nixon both knew that the fighting could continue only so long as the vague, hypothetical benefits of holding off Asian communism outweighed the immediate, palpable domestic pain. They knew that when the screaming grew too loud and too many sons had been killed, the game would be all over. That is why Vietnamization was such a godsend for Nixon, and it is also why our reluctance to say No helped prolong the war. The more we guaranteed that we would end up neither in uniform nor

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behind bars, the more we made sure that *our* class of people would be spared the real cost of the war. (Not that we didn't suffer. There was, of course, the *angst*, the terrible moral malaise we liked to write about so much in the student newspapers and undergraduate novels.)

The children of the bright, good parents were spared the more immediate sort of suffering that our inferiors were undergoing. And because of that, when our parents were opposed to the war, they were opposed in a bloodless, theoretical fashion, as they might be opposed to political corruption or racism in South Africa. As long as the little gold stars kept going to homes in Chelsea and the backwoods of West Virginia, the mothers of Beverly Hills and Chevy Chase and Great Neck and Belmont were not on the telephones to their congressmen, screaming *you killed my boy*, they were not writing to the President that his crazy, wrong, evil war had put their boys in prison and ruined their careers. It is clear by now that if the men of Harvard had wanted to do the very most they could to help shorten the war, they should have been drafted or imprisoned en masse.

This was not such a difficult insight, even at the time. Lyndon Johnson clearly understood it, which was the main reason why the *graduate school* deferment, that grotesque of class discrimination, lasted through the big mobilizations of the war, until the springtime of 1968. Even when that deferment was gone, Johnson's administrators came up with the intelligence-test plan for draft deferments, an even bolder attempt to keep those voluble upper classes off the President's back. What is interesting is how little of this whole phenomenon we at Harvard pretended to understand. On the day after the graduate school deferments were snatched away from us, a day Johnson must have dreaded because it added another set of nasty enemies to his list, the Harvard *Crimson* responded with a magnificently representative editorial entitled "The Axe Falls." A few quotes convey its gist:

"The axiom that this nation's tangled Selective Service System is bound to be unfair to somebody fell with a crash on the Harvard community yesterday. The National Security Council's draft directive puts almost all college seniors and most graduate students at the head of the line for next year's draft calls. Three-fourths of the second-year law class will go off to war. . . . Yesterday's directive is a bit of careless expediency, clearly unfair to the students who would have filled the nation's graduate schools next fall."

That was it, the almost incredible level of understanding and compassion we displayed at the time—the idea that the real victims of General Hershey's villainous schemes were *the students who would have filled the nation's graduate schools next fall.* Occasionally, both in the *Crimson* and elsewhere, there were bows to the discriminatory nature of the whole 2-S deferment system and the virtues of the random lottery which Edward Kennedy, to his eternal credit, was supporting almost singlehandedly at the time. But there was no mistaking which emotions came from the heart, which principles really seemed worth fighting for.

X-Ray Vision

It would be unfair to suggest that absolutely no thought was given to the long-run implications of our actions. For one thing, there were undercurrents of the sentiment that another *Crimson* writer, James Glassman, expressed in an article early in

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'The behavior of the upper classes in so deftly avoiding the war's pains is both a symptom and a partial cause of the class hatred now so busily brewing in the country.'

1968. "Two years ago, Harvard students complained that the system was highly discriminatory, favoring the well off," Glassman wrote. "They called the 2-S an unfair advantage for those who could go to college." But as the war wore on, "The altruism was forgotten. What was most important now was saving your own skin—preventing yourself from being in a position where you would have to kill a man you had no right to kill."

Moreover, a whole theoretical framework was developed to justify draft evasion. During many of the same meetings where I heard about the techniques of weight reduction, I also learned that we should think of ourselves as sand in the gears of the great war machine. During one of those counseling sessions I sat through a speech by Michael Ferber, then something of a celebrity as a codefendant in the trial of Dr. Spock. He excited us by revealing how close we were to victory. Did we realize that the draft machine was tottering towards its ultimate breakdown? That it was hardly in better condition than old General Hershey himself? That each body we withheld from its ravenous appetite brought it that much nearer the end? Our duty, therefore, was clear: as committed opponents of the war, we had a responsibility to save ourselves from the war machine.

This argument was most reassuring, for it meant that the course of action that kept us alive and out of jail was also the politically correct decision. The boys of Chelsea were not often mentioned during these sessions; when they were, regret was expressed that they had not yet understood the correct approach to the draft. We resolved to launch political-education programs, some under the auspices of the Worker-Student Alliance, to help straighten them out. In the meantime, there was the physical to prepare for.

It does not require enormous powers of analysis to see the basic fraudulence of this argument. General Hershey was never in danger of running out of bodies, and the only thing we were denying him was the chance to put *us* in uniform. With the same x-ray vision that enabled us to see in every Pentagon sub-clerk, in every Honeywell accountant, an embryonic war criminal, we could certainly have seen that by keeping ourselves away from both frying pan and fire we were prolonging the war and consigning the Chelsea boys to danger and death. But somehow the x-rays were deflected.

There was, I believe, one genuine concern that provided the x-ray shield and made theories like Ferber's go down more easily. It was a monstrous war, not only in its horror but in the sense that it was beyond control, and to try to fight it as individuals was folly. Even as we knew that a thousand, or ten thousand, college boys going to prison might make a difference, we knew with equal certainty that the imprisonment and ruination of any one of us would mean nothing at all. The irrational war machine would grind on as if we had never existed, and our own lives would be pointlessly spoiled. From a certain perspective, it could even seem like grandstanding, an exercise in excessive piety, to go to the trouble of resisting the draft. The one moral issue that was within our control was whether we would actually participate—whether, as Glassman put it, we would be forced to kill—and we could solve that issue as easily by getting a deferment as by passing the time in jail.

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The Merchants of Death

It isn't a pleasant exercise, dredging up these hulks, but I think reviewing my generation's feelings about Vietnam is important. It serves two purposes—to tell us about the past, and to tell us about the present.

The lesson of the past concerns the complexities of human motivation. Doubtless because the enemy we were fighting was so horrible in its effects, there was very little room for complexity or ambiguity in the anti-war campaigns. On the black and white spectrum by which we judged personal conduct, bureaucrats were criminals if they stayed inside the government and politicians cowards if they failed to vote for resolutions to end the war; the businessmen of Dow and Honeywell were craven merchants of death; and we, meanwhile, were nothing less than the insistent voice of morality, striving tirelessly to bring the country to its senses. The easiest way to see those feelings revived is to attend a showing of the movie *Hearts and Minds* in the company of the young. When the lone heralds of morality, the anti-war protesters, finally appear, the audience breaks into cheers. *We were right.*

Of course we were right to try to stop the war. But I recall no suggestion during the sixties that it was graceless, *wrong* of us to ask the Foreign Service officers to resign when we were not sticking our necks out at the induction center. Granted, there is a difference between those two risks; imprisonment for a felony is a serious matter, and it was perhaps one degree more perilous to refuse induction as a 21-year-old than to throw aside a career as the 45-year-old father of three. But our calculations rarely even reached that point. The normal benchmark of morality was this: if we were showing our stuff by taking to the picket lines (meanwhile continuing our cruise through college), then our elders were shameful, middle-aged cowards if they did not do their part, too. If nothing else, a glance back at our own record might give us an extra grain of sympathy for the difficulties of bringing men to honor, let alone glory.

The implications for the present are less comforting and go back to the question asked several pages ago. The behavior of the upper classes in so deftly avoiding the war's pains is both a symptom and a partial cause of the class hatred now so busily brewing in the country.

From its struggles in World War II, this country created a cushion of class toleration; our heritage from Vietnam is rich with potential for class hatred. World War II forced different classes of people to live together; Vietnam kept them rigidly apart, a process in which people like me were only too glad to cooperate. On either side of the class divide, the war has left feelings that can easily shade over into mistrust and hostility. Among those who went to war, there is a residual resentment, the natural result of a cool look at who ended up paying what price. On the part of those who were spared, there is a residual guilt, often so deeply buried that it surfaces only in unnaturally vehement denials that there is anything to feel guilty about. In a land of supposed opportunity, the comfortable hate to see the poor. Beneath all the explanations about self-help and just deserts, there remains the vein of empathy and guilt. Among the bright people of my generation, those who have made a cult of their high-mindedness, the sight of legless veterans and the memories of the Navy Yard must also touch that vein. They remind us that there was little character in the choices we made. ■

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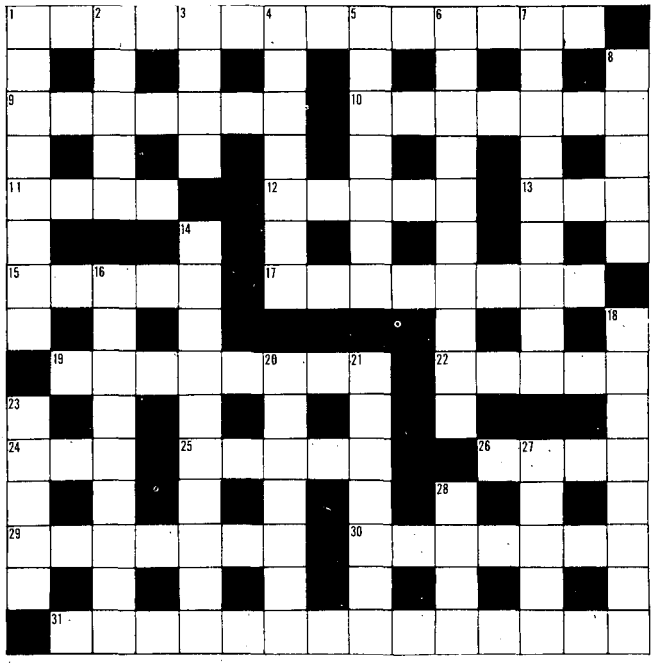
the political puzzle

by John Barclay



Across

1. E.g., doors, shelves and 12, 19, 22, and 31 across and 1, 2, 6, and 23 down. (7,7)
9. To make a celebrity from Zone 52. (7)
10. A humorist arises from the burr. (7)
11. Penalty for excellence? (4)
12. Our new Chief of State? (5)
13. Sign before Durocher. (3)
15. None with nothing—nobody! (5)
17. Mess left by fighting painters? (8)
19. War-god chamber comes to labor. (8)
22. Barrier in as to transportation. (5)
24. Something to drink in fairy empire. (3)
25. To be sexist in the end. (5)
26. A liberty token for justice. (4)
29. To pick out ain't mixed in pot. (5,2)
30. Difficulty arising from tub lore. (7)
31. Housing unit leader around chair stair-pair. (8,6)

Down

1. Hope for good health from Inca loaf. (8)
2. Plain-colored defense-man? (5)
3. Not in the red at roulette? (4)
4. Juries and apostles. (7)
5. Oppressed country—*i.e.*, sat on in a way. (7)
6. Allen Thumb astride the purse. (10)
7. Uncontrolled territory produces a bare leer. (5,4)
8. Street talk in town near Gotham. (5)
14. Reporter who's hard on the press? (10)
16. Follower of the United States. (2,7)
18. Church books created by last small president. (8)
20. Chinaman from CIA, as it arranged. (7)
21. She permitted the thing first-class backwards. (7)
23. She perks commercially. (5)
27. There's coal in them berries. (5)
28. Refreshment sends up bustles. (4)

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2, 3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word. Answers to last month's puzzle are on page 28.

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What Politicians Really Want

by Walter Shapiro

Despite the intensity of our current national crusade against corruption, the number of public officials who are actively for sale is relatively small—and, one suspects, they tend to be expensive. But the shrewder lobbyists know that the friendship of even uncorruptible officeholders can be won with such blandishments as luxury vacations, elaborate dinners, introductions to celebrities, and the other perquisites of the American upper class.

A governor like Marvin Mandel may be better known than almost all corporate executives, but he is forced to live on the maddeningly middle-class salary of $25,000. A senator may regularly appear before 50 million Americans on the evening news, but he must make ends meet on a salary of $42,500. For an elected official without personal wealth, thi. discrepancy between prominence and salary often rankles.

Some politicians overcome this problem by becoming so oblivious to reality that they actually live as if they were supported by accumulated capital rather than by their government salary. An extreme example is former New York Representative Seymour Halpern. *The Wall Street Journal* revealed in 1969 that Halpern, who was then third-ranking Republican on the House Banking Committee, had more than $100,000 in bank loans that were either seriously overdue or totally unsecured by collateral. Halpern's indebtedness—which eventually helped hasten his retirement—stemmed from his insistence on living in a manner that may have fitted his prominence but certainly not his income. As Jerry Landauer put it in the *Journal*, Halpern is a "man of extravagant habits—reaching impetuously for dinner checks at fine restaurants, sending his attractive wife to costly vacation spas, collecting valuable manuscripts. . . ." Not only was Halpern overdrawn at the bank, but he owed sizable sums to expensive French restaurants and hotels such as the Plaza in New York and the Fountainbleau in Miami Beach.

The phrase "living beyond one's means" has a dated ring, yet this expression often fits congressmen as closely as it fits the proverbial Westport advertising executive mortgaged to his eyebrows. Sometimes legislators find themselves in serious trouble, as did recently retired Illinois Representative Ken Gray, who, according to *The Washington Star*, used left-over campaign funds to help buy his $40,000 houseboat, *Rollcall*. Gray justified the complicated transaction that paid for the craft by arguing that it helped him entertain visitors from back home: "I thought the best way to entertain constituents was to let them see the beautiful Capitol from the Potomac."

Even the more dedicated members of Congress feel a conflict between their lifestyles and their income. In his

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book, *Inside the House*, Daniel Rapoport provides this glimpse of a prominent House liberal: "Ben and Leila Rosenthal do not live opulently. But they do live nicely. They enjoy the familiar comforts of an expensive country club and two vacations a year. . . . The Rosenthals readily concede that they live well. But in 1973 they said they were approaching the point where they would be living beyond their means." Similarly, many senators are feeling the financial pinch caused by a recent $15,000-a-year limit on the amount of speaking fees they can collect to supplement their salaries. Kandy Stroud recently reported in *New York* that a number of Senate wives are being forced to go to work to help make ends meet. The wives of both Mark Hatfield and John Tower, for example, are selling real estate.

Obviously, some of these salary problems are caused by expenses unique to Congress, such as maintaining two homes and frequent travel back to the home district. But many more stem from the exigencies of maintaining a suitably elevated lifestyle. Antoinette Hatfield, for example, explained that her clothing costs tended to be high because "Senate wives are expected to look better than the average person."

Recently, Alaska Senator Mike Gravel was described by columnist Jack Anderson as "living beyond his means" to support a "$200,000 dream house. . . in the fashionable Maryland countryside." In response to questioning about the column, Gravel, who was originally a real estate promoter in Alaska, justified his home ("it's actually worth $250,000") both in terms of his work ("in my business entertaining is *de rigueur*") and its investment possibilities. According to Gravel, this last idea came from none other than Lyndon Johnson, who, on the verge of leaving office, took some freshmen senators aside and gave them this secret of success in Washington—"Invest in local real estate."

More than any other recent figure in public life, Richard Nixon illustrates the degree to which elected officials can come to believe their prominence should permit them to live on a par with millionaires. Ever since Nixon journeyed to Wall Street after losing the 1962 California gubernatorial race, he has been devoured by his passion to accumulate enough capital to guarantee an upper-class lifestyle. It is this passion which explains his curious real estate transactions with Bebe Rebozo and Robert Abplanalp. Early this March, Jack Anderson reported that the former President "is deeply depressed over his finances." With a $60,000 pension, Nixon is in no real financial danger. But Anderson pinpoints the source of Nixon's anxiety: "He lacks the income to sustain his lifestyle. He is desperately looking for ways to increase his cash flow."

'I'm Calling From My Car'

I am not making a case for asceticism. Obviously, public officials should not be required to live like Ralph Nader. Neither should we overly praise Jerry Brown for deciding to live in a scantily furnished one-bedroom apartment instead of the California governor's mansion. But the financial problems of many in government explain why so often they become entranced with the trappings of office, with chauffeured limousines and elaborately equipped offices. Much has been written about the seductions of life in the White House. On a less exalted level, the chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is known, when driving around Washington, to call his staffers merely for the pleasure of saying: "I'm calling you from the

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phone in my car." For some, these luxuries can serve as tangible reminders that they have arrived, that they actually are high government officials.

For those (and there are many) who have gone into public service in quest of a certain lifestyle, there is a limit to how much satisfaction can be derived from having a refrigerator and a shower in your office. This explains why the most astute lobbyists can often win the friendship of congressmen and governors through little favors. For Marvin Mandel, the favor was a vacation in Jamaica. For someone else, it might be a chance to meet movie stars or to be accepted in the homes of aristocratic families. There are undoubtedly senators in Washington who are more likely to be swayed by a $30 lunch at an exclusive club that they don't belong to than by a $300 campaign contribution.

The shrewd lobbyist need not spend vast sums of money to provide a public official with what he wants. All he need do is follow the maxim that the perfect gift is something the recipient wants but would never buy for himself. (In contrast, even if a senator with a middle-class income took a bribe, he probably would feel obligated to do something sensible with it, like putting it aside for his children's college education.)

Elegant Rather Than Political

Last December, Tongsun Park, a somewhat mysterious Korean with a host of interests ranging from oil supertankers to the international rice trade, gave a birthday party for House Majority Leader "Tip" O'Neill. It was neither the kind of party that O'Neill, said to be a man of relatively modest habits, would have given for himself, nor just a mechanical tribute like a testimonial dinner. No, this party was elegant rather than political. The 100 invited guests were served wild goose at Washington's prestigious and genteelly subdued Madison Hotel.

If Park had been asked his motive for giving the party, he probably would have smiled and answered "friendship." Henry Mitchell of *The Washington Post* wrote that Park "was once a Georgetown student and roomed in those days with Rep. John Brademas and was interested in student politics and got to be friends with many congressmen. As the years passed, some of these friendships ripened and hence his fondness for O'Neill. . . ." If Mitchell was serious, this is an unbelievably saccharine view of the cosmos. Yet, one should not take too cynical a view and automatically assume that his party was given in return for a favor from O'Neill, for lobbyists like Park are often more subtle than that. Take, for example, the exquisite indirection of Park's going-away party for outgoing Attorney General William Saxbe. In the cutthroat world of Washington society, there are few gestures so seemingly selfless as giving a party for someone about to leave office. But parties like this cement ties of friendship with those in public life. There is no need for explicit *quid pro quos.* What Park has done is increase the likelihood that leading public officials will deal with him on a personal rather than a bureaucratic level the next time he wants something from the United States government.

Such subtle courting by lobbyists is one of the major problems of American political life. It would not disappear with tougher restrictions on campaign spending or with raising congressional and gubernatorial salaries to $60,000 or $80,000 a year. For as long as there are men who dream, not of the work they will do in office but of the life they will lead, there are going to be lobbyists who know how to get what they want by exploiting those dreams. ■

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Down and Out On Capitol Hill

by Arthur Levine

Congress is a grim place to be after an election is over. For the 51 legislators voted out of office in the 1974 primary and general elections, the return to the Hill is especially painful. Branded as losers, they have to finish out the remainder of their terms as best they can. Then they must seek work elsewhere, and the adjustment is not an easy one. Some of them take the loss very hard, like Frank Clark of Pennsylvania. In the year of the great Democratic landslide, the voters in his western Pennsylvania district handed the 20-year veteran his walking papers. But unlike most of his defeated colleagues, Clark is a Democrat, and so he and his aides are rather depressed these days. He is, to put it mildly, a sore loser. Peering out from behind a door in his office, the bow-tied little congressman shouts, "Please go away! I told you I'm not speaking to anyone!" He was one of four incumbent Democrats who managed to buck the nationwide anti-Republican trend.

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Like many of his fellow losers, Clark is not looking forward to going home. There's an excitement, a sense of importance, that comes from being a congressman, even a backbencher. There are bills, meetings, crises, all kinds of pressing matters that must be attended to. And, in his own view, leading the way is The Congressman, at center stage in The Nation's Capital, Washington, D.C. Many of them share the apprehension of David Towell, a one-term Nevada Republican, who has no desire to return to his real estate business back in Gardnerville. "I don't want to go back to what I was doing before. I've got a beautiful home there, it's great, but once you stimulate your mind here. . . well, selling homes in a rural area is not my bag anymore." For some congressmen, the transition to private life isn't made any easier by the peculiar limbo of a lame-duck Congress. Looking up at his clock, Rep. Towell says, "I used to be here at eight in the morning, but now what's the use?" Mail drops off, and colleagues may adopt an awkward congeniality. "It's like a wake," says Rep. James Grover, six-term Republi-

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can from Long Island. Other losers continue to act as if nothing's changed, working on legislation, going to committee, voting on bills, keeping up the pose of a man with important work to do. "I haven't abandoned the ship," asserts Republican Rep. Robert Huber of Michigan, "but there's a psychological reaction when you realize you're leaving, and the others will be back. It's depressing. The successful ones among your friends are sorry, and your enemies are secretly gloating."

The congressmen salvage what they can from the wreckage. Wisconsin Republican Harold Froehlich, for example, notes that he can buy his desk and chair for $25 each. Pounding on the dark, solid wood with his hand, he says, "Where else could you pick up a desk at this price?"

During this transition period, while they prepare for the descent into private life, the losers continue to cling to their public masks. They take care to remember names and to smile, measuring their words with a precision borne of too many speeches from the podium and the dais. Underneath the charm, the congressional manner is marked by large reserves of caution and guile, part of the necessary inner strength that allows them to weather the task of seeking voter approval. There is a certain formality that they preserve, even as their roles are about to end. At times, however, the masks drop and reality intrudes into their public musings.

The question: What do you plan to do now?

"We're keeping our options open, we're looking at a variety of things, Mr. Levine," says Oregon Republican John Dellenback. "We're examining what the needs of the world are and seeing where we might be able to make a substantial contribution." Robert Hanrahan, a Republican from Illinois, strikes a more modest note. Speaking in a confidential tone, he says, "Well, Arnold, we're not sure yet. We're keeping our options open." He is, however, a bit worried. Although he would like to be a college president—"that would be ideal"—he is considering applying for unemployment compensation while searching for a job. He doesn't want to uproot

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his Washington-based family again, and he's concerned about job security. His colleagues encourage him to run for his old seat, but he responds, "What am I supposed to do in the meantime? Sell pencils?"

Searching for a job is made difficult by the urge to stay in Washington. The politicians themselves refer to it lightly as "Potomac Fever," but there is more to it than that. Their ties with the home district erode over the years, and barriers develop between the congressmen and their old friends. The affection and respect of constituents does not mean as much as it did before; what counts now is their votes. The small symbols of local pride, the Kiwanis Club speech, the testimonial dinner, merely become chores essential to reelection. The petty concerns of hometown folk surround the congressman on his weekend visits. Viewed from the cold distance of Washington, the constituents seem a bit clownish. A delayed social security check hardly engages the mind like an upcoming debate on the energy crisis.

There is a subtle transfer of loyalties—the change from being a Californian-in-Washington to being a member of the Washington world who must return every so often to California to retain his legal right to his Washington position. This does not go unnoticed by the voters.

William Ayres, a Republican from Akron, Ohio, says that after a 20-year career ending in 1971, "I didn't have ties back there." He started renting his house out in 1960 and sold it in 1964. Later, he sold his heating company. "I didn't have a desire to go back into the heating business after I lost," he says. He stayed in Washington, working for three years as a highly paid special assistant to a presidential commission on veterans' jobs, an area he specialized in as a congressman.

A few congressmen, like Frank Clark, try to stay on with the House itself. In early December, Clark challenged William "Fishbait" Miller for the post of House Doorkeeper. If elected, Clark would have had the honor of announcing the President's appearances before Congress and greeting dignitaries at congressional parties. He would also have administered 340 House positions, filling these patronage jobs at the request of his former colleagues. The loss of dignity would have been compensated, no doubt, by the $40,000 salary and the added pension benefits. But since he placed last in the challenge to Miller, trailing behind two House clerks, Clark now finds himself, like his fellow losers, keeping his options open.

Clark's efforts were not unique. The Clerk of the House, W. Patrick Jennings, was a six-term Virginia congressman when he was defeated for reelection. He has been the House Clerk for eight years now. Standing outside his office, looking suitably tan and dignified, Jennings smiles and says he took the job for "personal reasons," primarily the pension benefits.

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Diana H. Walker

"We're examining what the needs of the world are and seeing where we might be able to make a contribution."
—Rep. John Dellenback

But his motives were not solely mercenary: "I like the way of life and wanted to stay involved. I wanted to make a contribution." Another congressman, Baltimore Democrat Sam Friedel, was defeated at age 72, after 18 years of service. He and his wife lived a block away from the Capitol, and Friedel struggled to become deputy sergeant-at-arms, a job that was created for him by the committee he once chaired, the House Administration Committee. The idea was dropped following press criticism, but Friedel stayed on in Washington anyway. One congressional staff member recalls how he would see Friedel early each morning in the House cafeteria, eating breakfast by himself, reading the paper with an air of importance. Then the aging ex-congressman would get up as usual, heading toward an office that did not exist.

Others stay in Washington as lawyers, lobbyists, or consultants. Such men as Frank Ikard, once a Democratic representative from Texas, who is now president of the American Petroleum Institute, get a chance to cash in on their congressional contacts. More than money is involved, however. Former Democratic Rep. Byron G. Rogers, who joined a Washington public relations firm, says, "After 20 years in Washington, you know the ins and outs here so much better than you do back there." After his 1972 defeat, the once-powerful South Carolina Democrat, John McMillan, started work as a "political consultant." "I just want to do something to keep me busy. . . a place to hang my hat," he told *Congressional Quarterly* at the time. For a veteran like McMillan, the capital's attractions proved too strong.

There will be more than enough opportunity for return visits, since so many of them will stay on in the capital. Surveys conducted by *Congressional Quarterly* a few months after the 1970 and 1972 elections

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showed that most former members remained in Washington. Perhaps they are attracted by the privilege all former members retain—not only can they visit the House floor, they also have access to the cloakrooms and dining rooms whenever they want.

For most congressmen, what they will miss about Congress is not so much the power as the minor flatteries of the office. It is these benefits that add to the appearance of power, benefits available to all congressmen, regardless of seniority.

The ex-congressman will be quickly shorn of an aura of omniscience. Because he was a *Congressman*, in Washington, he was supposed to be privy to all kinds of inside information. The belief persists that congressmen know what's *really* going on, but for some perverse reason, they're not telling. "The day after you win, everybody's asking your opinion on absolutely everything," says Rep. David Towell. "The media and the public think I know what's going on, but I don't."

The former legislators will become nostalgic about the side benefits that made them feel so important. They will recall those bargain-priced meals in the House dining rooms, the paddleball games in the Rayburn gym, the special elevators reserved only for them. Gone from their lives are the aides and secretaries, the briefing sessions, and the tight schedules. And no one will call them "Mr. Congressman" any more.

Men of Importance, After All

These small tokens of power are hardest to give up. "I'm going to miss having that special parking place at the airport and a free telephone in my office," says Bob Mathias. "I was able to call up my friends in California any time I wanted."

For some men, these items are a constant reassurance that they are, in fact, congressmen engaged in meaningful work—men of importance, after all. Take James Grover, a quiet, silver-haired Republican, who had the misfortune of being defeated by a 25-year-old kid who lives at home with his parents. After 12 years in the House, the 55-year-old Long Island congressman had climbed his way to high-ranking positions on two committees: Merchant Marine and Fisheries, and Public Works. He served as ranking minority member on both the Public Buildings and Grounds subcommittee and the Canal Zone subcommittee. Not only did he lead the Republican floor fight for additional funds for the Kennedy Center, he even visited the Canal Zone in faraway Central America. But his proudest moment came during debate in the House chamber. "I always go to the floor ready to do battle," he says. "I've never lost a floor fight." He recalls the tension in the House when he rose to settle the jurisdictional fight between Public Works, and Marine and Fisheries over off-shore oil-terminal legislation. Grover, usually quiet (he spoke only three times his first year), dared to oppose his colleagues on the Public Works Committee. As a result of his eloquence, the bill ended up with the Marine and Fisheries Committee. To underscore his impressive seniority, he notes, "If I had been appointed to the Judiciary Committee as a freshman, I'd now be ranking minority member like Edward Hutchinson."

The power he has accumulated over the years is best indicated by the collection of mementos in his spacious inner office. On a wall behind his desk are photographs of a short-haired Grover standing near Jerry Ford, Richard Nixon, Ike, John McCormack, and other luminaries. None of

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Diana H. Walker

"What am I supposed to do? Sell pencils?" —Rep. Robert Hanrahan

the photos is autographed.

He also displays a few pens and commemorative coins sent by Nixon. A portion of one wall is taken up by a framed copy of an amendment to a 1959 public buildings act. And mounted on another wall is an unflattering cartoon from *Newsday*, apparently the only time he was ever caricatured.

When Grover talks about his defeat and his future plans, he speaks slowly, glancing down at his hands and smiling ruefully. He finds some comfort in the Democratic upsets of other Suffolk County Republicans, meticulously detailing all the party losses—"The county hasn't voted for a Democratic governor in 60 years!" Seeing himself at the mercy of anti-incumbent sentiments beyond his control, he lessens his own humiliation by portraying inflation and Watergate as virtual demons let loose among the precincts. He accuses his young opponent of distorting his voting record and of making unfair conflict-of-interest charges. Grover maintains a part-time law practice, serves on the board of directors of a savings-and-loan institution, and owns a share of business property. "He made it look like I was rolling in dough." Actually, the congressman made less than $3,000 a year from outside sources. Unlike some other congressmen, who

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are able to become well-paid Washington lawyers or lobbyists, Grover is hardly besieged with corporate offers. "I've never attempted to capitalize on my position," he says, with some regret. Before he entered the State Assembly in 1957, he was making $35,000 a year as a lawyer. "It's going to take some time to rebuild my practice. Presumably, I'll join one of the large law firms."

'How Well I Know Him'

But he says he is also giving serious thought to working in the Administration. Like some elder statesman considering a Cabinet post, he announces, with appropriate "Meet the Press" deliberation, "I will have to look at what's available." Then, to show that he is not being frivolous, he unfurls a letter. "Take a look at this gracious letter," he says with some pride. It is a one-paragraph note on White House stationery, addressed "Dear Jim," from a White House aide, Max Friedersdorf. It indicates that Grover will have an opportunity to meet with the President after he returns from overseas travel. Grover, meanwhile, is banking on his ties with Donald Rumsfeld, the White House chief of staff. "I know Don quite well," he says. "He's a club member of mine." What club? "The '88th Club.' We were sworn in together in the 88th Congress. And we were teammates in the gym." He adds, with studied nonchalance, "I know some other club members, fellows like Rogers Morton, Bob Taft, Bill Brock." He glances at me to check the impact of his star-studded listing.

I ask him, "How well do you know the President?"

"Well, Art, I was one of the Young Turks who helped him become Minority Leader. I remember that Rep. Jack Wydler and I flew down on the shuttle that day and walked in to vote just on time. He was glad to see us. And on the day that he was selected by Nixon to be Vice-President, I walked to where he was standing in the well of the House and grabbed him by the wrist, took his pulse, and asked him whether he was nervous." He pauses dramatically. "That's just an illustration of how well I know him. I mean, I was able to kid around with him like that."

Grover will miss Congress and the friends he made there. "I'll miss the pressure of a long day, and being involved in controversy and issues. I keep telling myself Congress is a treadmill, but maybe there will be a psychological let-down when I've left."

Later, in the gloom of the bar of the Republican Capitol Hill Club, I hear a Republican staffer say, "With guys like Grover, you can see the hurt in their eyes. It's terrible when an election does this to people. You want to shake them by the lapel and snap them out of it."

If former congressmen never make it back, after abandoning all hope of a comeback attempt, they're entitled to join a 400-member group called Former Members of Congress, Inc., founded by a former Democratic congressman from Arkansas, Brooks Hays. The group holds reunions twice a year. In the spring they get to return to the House chamber and address the representatives. Surrounded by their old wooden desks, with the American flag draped behind them, the defeated have a chance once again to make speeches before an admiring audience. The keynote speech is made by the oldest former congressman, occasionally a centenarian. The honor shifts each year because of the mortality rate.

"It was a very lovely session," Brooks Hays says of their latest meeting. "It gives the men a feeling of belonging." ■

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Taste, Class, and Mary Tyler Moore

by Suzannah Lessard

The work of Edith Wharton may seem an unlikely place to look for illumination of current affairs, but there is one respect in which her novels and stories cast light on the workings of our own world. That is the role which cultivation, in the sense of a sophisticated appreciation of the arts and of ideas, plays in the American class structure. Social standing, in the old sense of who your parents are, is no longer a criterion, although a touch of that sort of glitter still can be made to go a long way; note the prominence of the Prince and Princess Von Furstenburg—surely a couple of characters out of left field if there ever was one—in New York society columns, or the extra sheen the name "Bouvier" gives Jackie Onassis, not lost despite the almost blinding dazzle of her two other more newly glorious names. On the whole, though, the upper reaches of contemporary society are inhabited by self-made people. The result is a more accessible elite, in the sense that a Barbara Howar from the boondocks can make it to the top on sheer ingenuity, and a more interesting one, in the sense that talent rather than genealogical credentials is the surer ticket to social success. At the very least it makes for variety. Where the social notes of Edith Wharton's old New York would drop the names of a series of nearly identical stuffed shirts whose main claim to fame was their forefathers' success in business, Leo Lerman's column, "People Are Talking About," in the February *Vogue*, mentions Joel Grey the actor, Larry Brown the football player, Princess Radziwill ("that's Lee"), Treasury Secretary "Bill" Simon, "the Warhol gang," as well as Rauschenberg, Andre Malraux, and Vladimir Horowitz (with Princess Lee, representative of pure status without accomplishment, these last high-cultural three give the select company its real "touch of class").

The fact that the high circles are accessible to a variety of people, however, does not mean that people judge each other more liberally than they once did. In fact, a case could be made that, in the absence of a standard measure of acceptability, a far more obsessive and byzantine method of cataloguing has evolved, and that this is not true just of society-column existence, but of the wider cosmopolitan circles that fringe on Leo Lerman's hectic, paisley world. The rapid, sophisticated computations of multiple labels—dress, job, school, intelligence, political attitudes, accents (Southern country is passable, suburban Long Island is not), and acquaintances—with which one person

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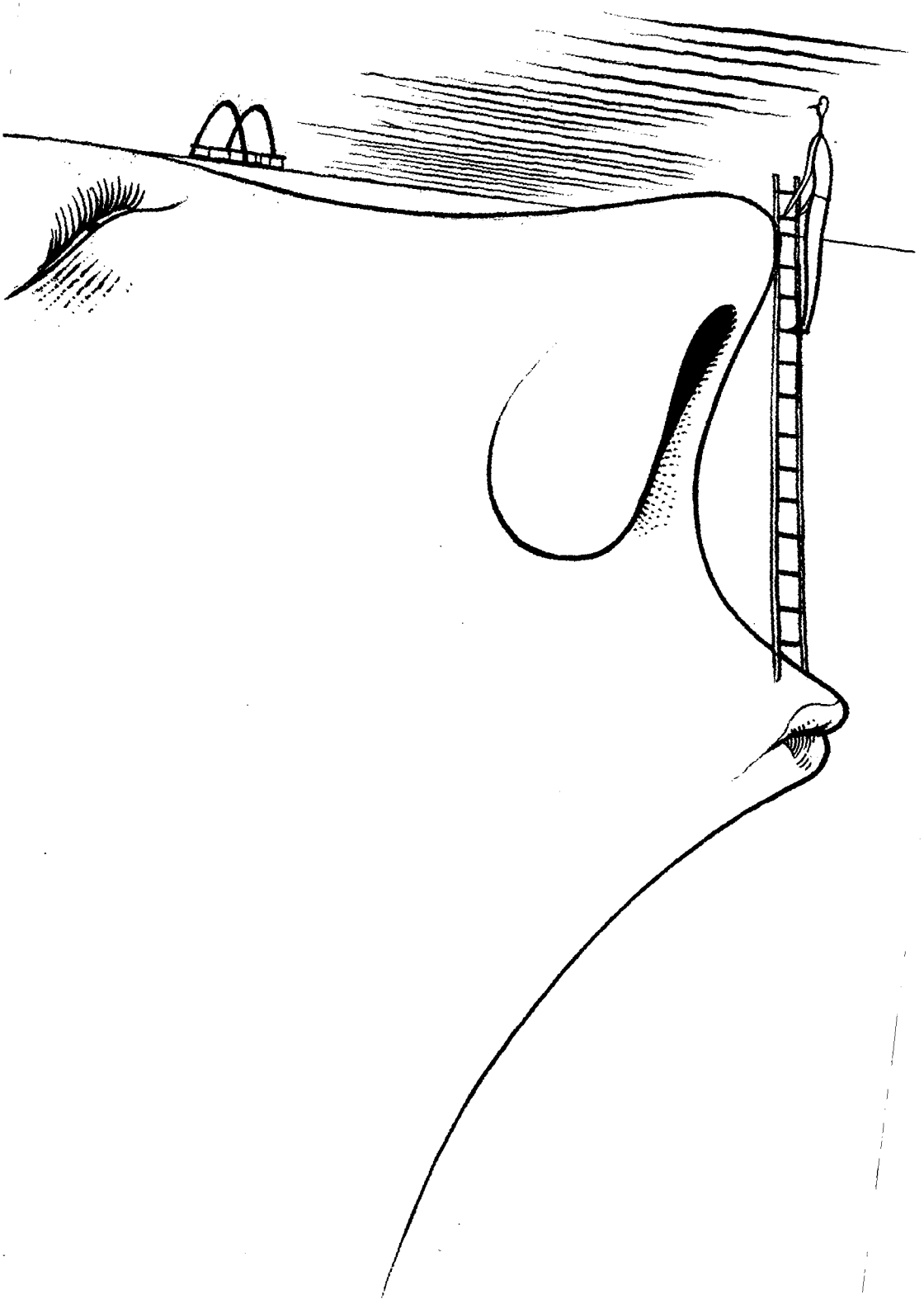

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judges whether another "is one of us" make the old society's manner of judging (what's your pedigree—usually meaning how much money do you have and how long have you had it) seem more innocent than snobbish. Being "in" nowadays is a condition that must be constantly and feverishly maintained and can depend upon such unexpected attributes as knowing a Black Panther yesterday and John Dean today, wearing your hair in a crew-cut (if you are a woman—it's currently a sign of homosexuality for a man), or being an aficionado of "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" (don't rely on this one—it's already stale). We all know this and laugh at it as we engage in our particular compromise with the game, but underneath there is a more serious questioning of ourselves and each other. Boiled down, the old question, are you a lady or a gentleman? has been replaced by the query, are you an aristocrat of the spirit? It's a much better question, but it has its complications.

The complications arise from the intense pressure on people to prove themselves aristocrats of the spirit—to be sensitive and aware—which is generated in a class structure in which distinctions are made largely according to these qualities. Pedigree was something you either had or you didn't have. Sensibility and awareness are qualities you can acquire, but they are also extremely perishable—or at least an image of having them is. Since that image is of such great importance in the standing one has among one's peers, the genuine search for true values gets mixed up with self-promotion, the need to draw the line between the philistines and the chosen people and put yourself on the right side. This is true in the world of the arts—the world of culture in the narrow sense—but also in the underworlds of politics and ideas.

In Edith Wharton's work one can see some of the roots of these complications in an explicit way when she casts her cold eye on the conventions of her time but, more interestingly, in what she unwittingly reveals about her own attitudes. In the world that she wrote about—turn-of-the-century New York "society"—cultural values were a fairly low grade of currency. It was important to know the name of the latest book and to be seen at the opera, but (at least according to Mrs. Wharton) a genuine interest in the arts was actually a liability. In one sense, this world was her target in the same way the foibles of contemporary society are for Tom Wolfe: she took aim at the false values of fashionable circles, the idiotic indices people use in judging each other, their enslavement to fads in tastes, and the hypocrisy behind their enthusiasm for those fads and for the people they "accepted." On a more serious level, the theme of most of her novels and short stories is how this frivolous, mindless world victimized worthy souls, obliviously crushing them in the trivial but brutal machinery of their value system. The worthy souls are the true aristocrats, and their tragedy is that they live in a fundamentally commercial society, where money is really all that counts and where true nobility of spirit is likely to invite ruin.

A More Frenetic Version

I don't think Edith Wharton can be held up as a mirror image of America's neuroses, but in a limited sense contemporary society echoes her own complex. When the concept of an hereditary upper class crumbled out of that very lifelessness and purposelessness that Edith Wharton spent so much energy lambasting, cultivation did become one of the major criteria for membership in the cosmopolitan elite. To a degree, this is just a more frenetic version of the value system

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Mrs. Wharton had made fun of—the acquisition of the latest avant-garde paintings, rushing out to the Theater of the Absurd, quickly boning up on Malraux to add gloss to your cocktail conversation—more frenetic perhaps because a social aspirant now has nothing but cultivation to rely on to distinguish himself, has no listing in a social register to point to when this other, extremely vulnerable form of legitmacy begins to erode.

But there is a more serious aspect to all this. As Edith Wharton, doubtful of her own legitimacy, clung to the idea of superior artistic sensibilities as the true sign of distinction, no American today can enjoy a secure sense of social superiority and must not only be measured and remeasured by the vague standard of cultivation but looks to that standard for his own measurement of himself. Are your values true? Are they profound? Are they refined? The difference between the surface fripperies—which we can laugh at—and the serious struggle underneath could be described as the difference between Edith Wharton's characters, who lend themselves so easily to satire, and her own urgent, fumbling endeavor to identify the true light, an effort which is clearly directed by her deepest feelings about life and yet which breaks into expression in such trivial, helplessly inarticulate forms as saying that someone is noble because he reads poetry once in a while.

A second similarity between present day society and Edith Wharton is that the backdrop against which we measure ourselves and each other is the rest of the country—"American Culture"—which we must despise and resist in order to distinguish ourselves from it, in order to distinguish ourselves at all. There is always much breast-beating about how artists and intellectuals are pariahs in America, which, if it pays any attention to them at all, wants only to turn them into commodities, but the truth is that it is precisely through carefully disassociating itself from American Culture that the elite distinguishes itself. As Edith Wharton posed her artistic and moral values (they are, for her, often the same) against her probably exaggerated, most certainly oversimplified tapestry of a morally and culturally ugly American society, the elite today draws attention to its specialness by posturing on cultural ramparts against the lurid apocalypse of a degraded, even evil mass culture in which the values of television commercials are lumped with the morals of the Vietnam war.

The Aesthetic Elect

Class differences thus are to a great extent drawn along the lines of the aesthetic (and therefore probably moral) elect versus the cultural philistines, a distinction which, as a result, becomes invested with far more passion than is warranted. As an index of how serious the true value game is, think of how an educated American can wound another most deeply: by suggesting he is dishonest or a cad in his personal relationships, by implying that he is mediocre at his trade, or by implying that he is a philistine. The last, I think, would inflict at least as great a hurt as the others. When Katherine Kuh, for many years art critic for the old *Saturday Review*, wrote that Andrew Wyeth was a drastically overestimated painter, really a "potboiler," an "illustrator," a painter of tepid, sentimental renditions of the past, she provoked a violent flood of letters, most of them attacking her rather than her ideas, including one which speculated that Wyeth had turned down a "salacious proposition" from the critic. Presumably, the *Saturday Review*'s readership, while broad, was still what one would call

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select. (The people one sees standing in line to see Wyeth's work are not country bumpkins, observed Kuh.) This was a battle over who was *more* select, a skirmish over one of the lines in the class structure of concentric circles in which each circle fights to distinguish itself from the next one outward, which it militantly blurs with "the masses." I don't think Katherine Kuh was attempting to do anything more than make a genuine aesthetic judgment (although the terms she chose to dismiss Wyeth could not have been more hurtful to him or his admirers), but I wonder how many of her readers who had not particularly committed themselves to Wyeth saw Kuh's opinion as a potential weapon and abruptly dismissed Wyeth at the next opportunity, preferably after someone else had expressed admiration.

Disputes across these lines touch a deep nerve and provoke disproportionate ferocity. Losers can find themselves suddenly besieged by the weapons of true values, as though they had suddenly turned into a McDonald's hamburger stand which had invited itself into an Upper East Side neighborhood. Katherine Kuh called Wyeth—and by extension his devotees—a McDonald's. In America, that's going for the jugular, and any weapon available (Andrew Wyeth wouldn't sleep with her) must be used against such a lethal smear. (The battle is made additionally complex by the fact that calling someone an elitist is a viable weapon in the true value game.)

This sort of confrontation takes place on successive fronts. Michael Novak writes of the popular (mass) antipathy toward the national press: "National journalists participate in the culture of the upper classes—in the mobile, fluid, national superculture of America's higher circles. . . . What people resent in the media is the arrogance that tells people every day: 'We're smarter, better informed, more critical, more skeptical than you. You've been mass-produced; we've been specially produced, custom-made.' "

Social 'True Values'

The world of politics has its own version of the true value-class game. One could almost say that it is William Buckley's métier to make opponents look stupid and clumsy (unrefined), thereby giving his own positions a cachet they otherwise never would have. By furiously generating an aura of wit and intelligence, he has given conservatives a classiness (a *seriousness*) which would be severely lacking if it were left to people like Ronald Reagan and Roman Hruska. The jostling for the "aware" position on the left has become fairly standard material for satire—a good thing for the left—but for the moment, in the dead air space between the moral hurricanes of Vietnam and Watergate and the premonition of world-wide economic disaster, there are few sure causes. But we have all seen the tremendous social lift that association with the current "true values" can give and the ostracism that can descend upon a person who takes a "wrong" (naive, unliberal, unintelligent, uninformed) position.

Besides being a bad habit, a trick which is used to wound, to inflict an injury of class, the chief damage done by the excessive preoccupation with and fear of philistinism is that it cramps growth and exchange of ideas. The endeavor to identify enduring values—in art, in political ideas, in ways of seeing—is a genuine one, but if one party is going to feel a withering panic when another adroitly brands his icon as phony, no dialogue can take place, only war, a war of self-esteem. Thus in the name of the

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really important work of distinguishing between the genuine and the ersatz, ideas are turned into mascots and slogans in a struggle for a kind of personal ascendency. It is precisely because the business of discrimination—of piercing the aura of sanctity which can obscure the fallacy of an idea or a flaw in a piece of work, and of selecting enduring values in the flood of trivial notions that are constantly magnified by the lens of fashion—is so important that the psychology that perverts this business is important in a negative sense.

The McDonald's Image

The other bad effect is the rigidly antipathetic attitude that this preoccupation generates toward American Culture, toward the country at large. I wonder, do French intellectuals posture against the crassness of popular Frenchmen? Do refined Italians offset their superiority by cultivating an attitude of disdain for their "duller" compatriots? I don't really know enough to say, but what small experience I do have indicates that if this is done at all, Europeans do not use their own countries, but ours, as the backdrop. They import the McDonald's image. Europe postures against America. When I run across this it makes me angry because I think it's cowardly and self-serving. Just as I think Edith Wharton, safe in Paris, was. Just as I think people here who pantomime aesthetic agony in front of McDonald's are, too, although at least they are on the scene.

The narrowing in the gap in income between the upper and middle classes was probably a major reason why the true values games heated up into an exercise in class distinction. But in the last 20 years, even the credential of cultivation has been under siege, for culture, like money, has become available to the masses. "Everybody" goes to Europe now, and "everybody" appreciates Picasso, so in order to assert the badge of true values—the quality of being discriminating—a social aspirant has to seek out more and more obscure European villages with a scrap of "undiscovered" fresco in the old church and make more and more daring *avant* choices in the painting he will buy to hang on his wall (or, if he is not in that financial league, to talk about). Though the great masterpieces hang there, it does you no social good to go to the Uffizi, and you might even do damage to yourself if you mention a visit to the Parthenon. In the social context, true values are useful only if most other people don't hold them, only if "the others," like Edith Wharton's characters, don't know. If lots of others do "know," then knowing doesn't set you apart at all: you are just a member of the masses jostling through the impressionists show at the Metropolitan Museum. (The museum and its blockbuster shows are now *the* biggest tourist attraction in New York, according to *The New York Times*.)

And so the game—the values war—has become more heated than ever, and, with this new intensity, the price which inevitably accompanies a linkage of values with social distinction has probably also become greater. The price is the open exchange of ideas in an atmosphere in which scrutiny of values is uncluttered by the distorting emotions of class image, of a desire for personal superiority. Instead, we have a world where the questioning of values is too often taken as an intent to hurt and debase the holder of those values (and, in fact, is frequently so intended) and where values themselves are held less as living aids than as a kind of pedigree, the questioning of which is as grave a personal assault as it once was to question the legitimacy of a lady of society's birth. ■

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Mary McCarthy~ The Blinders She Wears

by James Fallows

Mary McCarthy's importance as a political writer is no longer to be overlooked. Eight years ago she was exclusively a novelist and literary critic; this spring, she is publishing books on *both* Watergate and Vietnam* (a unique accomplishment), and she is a star political correspondent for *The New York Review of Books*. Her commentary has a larger significance as well, for it indicates another wrinkle in the rough connection between political writing and political reality. This magazine has published several articles exploring the ways journalism can more fully embrace the truth of public affairs. Several months ago I wrote an article suggesting that a novelist's eye and understanding would improve most writing about public affairs. Mary McCarthy's political writing shows the other side of the story: the damage that can be done by a novelist with insufficient care for the facts.

Her two books on the war are a good place to start in an evaluation of Mary McCarthy's writing. *Vietnam* and *Hanoi* were the products of trips in 1967 and 1968 to Indochina, the first to South Vietnam and the second to the North. They were published as reportage in *The New York Review*, then re-issued as books, and now form part of *The Seventeenth Degree*. (The third major essay in the new book is *Medina*, originally published in 1972, an account of the 1971 trial which led to the acquittal of Ernest Medina, William Calley's commanding officer at the time of the My Lai massacre.)

Mary McCarthy undertook *Vietnam* and *Hanoi* as her personal effort to do something about the war. The first words of *Vietnam* are, "I confess that when I went to Vietnam early last February I was looking for material damaging to the American interest

*The Vietnam book, *The Seventeenth Degree*, is a collection of old writings with a new introduction; the Watergate book is called *Mask of State*.

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and that I found it . . . ." Unfortunately both books suffered from a deficiency that severely limited their worth as either literature or as polemic—a lack of objectivity so profound as to make even sympathizers wary. In both countries she applied her renowned skill in rendering detail. (It is said that when Edmund Wilson, her husband for a time, was teaching Mary McCarthy to write, he would stand her in front of a store window, let her look for 30 seconds, and then turn her around and make her describe the contents.) But the details she selected in the one country were so different from what she reported from the other that, even with the considerable differences between North and South Vietnam taken into account, the contrast was implausibly overstated. South Vietnam was peopled by the greedy and the diseased; the North Vietnamese were pioneer stock making their way with fortitude and bold resolve. In the South, Mary McCarthy shows us a leper colony; in the North, a group of school children not only radiant with health ("No acne in North Vietnam") but also well-mannered nearly to a fault ("You would not find such a well-disciplined class in America today"—has she forgotten her Catholic upbringing?). There are hateful masses in the South; in the North "wherever you go you are met with smiles, cheers, hand clapping. Passers-by stop to wave at your car on the road. . . . In glaring contrast to Saigon, Hanoi is clean—much cleaner than New York, for example." Such is the difference in sanitation that while the South cannot keep even its hospitals clean, even the pigs in the North are housed in "clean pigsties," a notion that adds considerably to previous understanding of what "pigsty" means.

No doubt the North of Ho Chi Minh and the South of the fast-turnover dictators possessed some of the features Mary McCarthy attributed to them, but the comparison was so out of balance as to lose its verisimilitude. The fault cannot simply be traced to her political commitment; no one could have been more committed than Daniel Ellsberg, after all, and yet when he decided to talk, his *Papers on the War* carried great persuasive weight. The Ellsberg comparison suggests the real defect in Mary McCarthy's work: that she was practicing set-piece journalism without taking any of the necessary precautions against the hazards of the genre.

Switching the Brain To Automatic

"Set-piece" writing, which is increasingly the dominant mode of political and literary criticism, means that the author confines himself to one discrete topic, one occasion for writing—be it a book to review, a play to criticize, or a journey on which to report. Having selected his "set-piece," the writer then trims his own curiosity—often automatically—so as to prevent it from extending beyond the bounds of the set-piece. To give the most notable example, there is nothing prohibiting book reviewers from including more factual material, original research, even talks with the authors, in their essays. Reviews might be better for the inclusion, but automatic habits of mind ("I'll knock off that review this afternoon") prevent most writers from thinking of it. Mary McCarthy's case illustrates the more subtle difficulty, which is that even when writers make strenuous efforts to leave their writer's-den—whether by going to Vietnam or covering the presidential campaign—they can often switch their brains to automatic and let the set-piece do their thinking for them.

Sometimes high-quality work does

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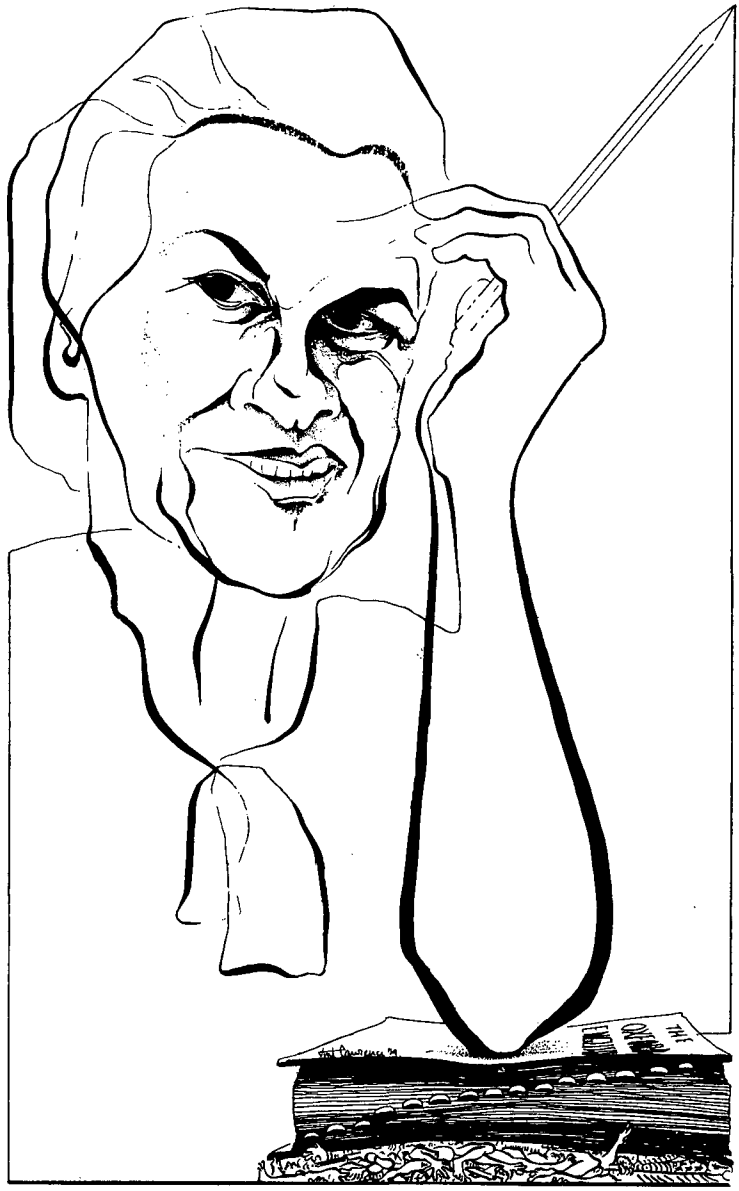

grow out of a set-piece, but when that happens it is usually because the writer has one of two qualifications. He may, on the one hand, bring to the set-piece such a body of experience and reflection that the specific topic becomes an occasion for rich speculation. (This is the difference, as commonly understood, between "book reviewers" and "critics." It is also the quality that enabled Daniel Ellsberg to make sense of that great set-piece, the Pentagon Papers. Having seen the way the war worked from the inside, Ellsberg was able to write "What Nixon Is Up To," which *The New York Review* published in 1971, before Ellsberg was a celebrity.) If, on the other hand, he lacks the experience, the writer can still make something of the set-piece by roaming abroad from its borders to find the pieces of evidence not conveniently included in the package. I. F. Stone is one of the very few who have navigated this second course successfully.

Unfortunately Mary McCarthy is qualified by neither of these tests. Her experience is not deep enough for her to make sense consistently of what she's shown, and she is almost never willing to step beyond the confines of the formal set-piece presentation. Nonetheless, virtually all her political

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writing works from set-pieces: the trips to Vietnam, the Medina trial, the Watergate hearings, the books by David Halberstam and Robinson Risner. That means that while her political writing has its virtues, it is generally a lesson in what to avoid.

The Limits of Pure Sensitivity

Prime among Mary McCarthy's virtues is that she will tell you what she sees. Now and then in the Vietnam and Watergate books she sticks in an awkward fact, like sand in the oyster, just to let you know it has not escaped her notice. Her portrayals of the Watergate principals are some of the most sympathetic yet to appear; she lavishes care on John Mitchell, especially, to absolve him of the worst sins and present him as a pathetic victim done in by his own ideas of loyalty. In South Vietnam, she prefers the blunt-spoken Marines to the mealy-mouthed PR men; at least the soldiers won't lie to you. In the North, her hosts present her with an aluminum ring; the metal it is made of came from an American plane they shot down. She admits a physical aversion to the ring, and realizes that "quite a few of the questions one does not, as an American liberal, want to put in Hanoi are addressed to oneself." These insights ring true because she knows what she is talking about. She comes armed with the kind of relevant experience that enables her to interpret wisely.

Why aren't there more of these moments? Because Pure Sensitivity, untainted by fact or research, can go only so far, and then it runs into things that are actually different than they seem. *The Seventeenth Degree* and *Mask of State* are full of these deceptions, cases in which Mary McCarthy, for one reason or another, is not able to draw valid conclusions from what she sees—and, far from reserving her opinion, goes on to interpret the situation boldly and incorrectly. One of the more egregious instances arises in her discussion of the economics of communist states. Those countries are better suited to retard impersonal modern technologies than is the West, because "variety of manufacturers, encouragement of regional craft, ought to be easier for communist planners whose enterprises are not obliged by the law of the market to show a profit or perish." In this case she does not know what she is talking about. Economic planners from Bulgaria to, yes, North Vietnam could tell her that when they are choosing their projects, they—like their brothers the capitalists—rely on cost-benefit analyses to determine where to put their money. They may call it "people's gain" rather than "profit," but they're talking about the same thing (as the paucity of "regional craft" in most socialist states indicates).

The misunderstandings that occur in *Mask of State*, are generally of a slightly different type: mistaking the ploys and double-whammies one side was using against the other for the real, unrehearsed historic action. It is obvious by now that the Administration's greatest weapon during the Ervin hearings was John J. Wilson, the aged fireplug of a lawyer who seemed always to be rebuking the Senators for their offenses against his clients, Haldeman and Ehrlichman. After four or five of his outbursts, Ervin and the rest were so buffaloed that they began directing their tactics with the primary goal of preventing Wilson from yelling. What did it matter if Mr. and Mrs. America thought Wilson was outrageous if he was keeping the ogre from his clients' door? George V. Higgins, in a superb article in the April *Atlantic*, captured the importance of Wilson:

"Whenever the committee got

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close to his clients, or to the President, who had some interest in how they did, he went into his best crusty-old-lawyer number. He got into legal arguments with Ervin, and used up Ervin's time. He professed inability to understand Baker's questions, and used up Baker's time. He locked horns with Weicker, and made him very angry, and used up Weicker's time . . . well-prepared, and a wall-eyed disaster for the committee. He did what a good lawyer is supposed to do for his client: he ate the opposition alive."

How much of the insider's story did Mary McCarthy capture? Wilson is introduced as a grotesque, one of those alarming night creatures likely to crawl out from odd corners of the capital: "John L. Wilson, the dean of reactionary lawyers in Washington, a querulous dropsical old party with a mean City Hall mouth and a shrill ungoverned temper recalling Rumpelstiltskin." Shortly afterwards she dismisses him as a powerless ninny and does not let us hear from him again: "Wilson's querulous objections got shriller; you expected him to stamp his tiny foot like a thwarted Fury when overruled." Wilson, of course, could not have cared less how he looked on TV, or to Mary McCarthy. In fact, the more of this kind of publicity he got, the better his strategy worked.

Glued To Her Seat

No one can know everything, but what makes these misperceptions the more alarming is that Mary McCarthy does not take the one step that could prevent them. If John Wilson seemed to be making a fool of himself, with his clients' approval, she might have asked a lawyer or even another reporter about what was going on. But, apart from one tour of the Watergate Hotel (where she was staying), she makes no attempt to stir from her seat. She says in *Medina* that the trial itself was a colossal bore. It gave her time to speculate—for example, about the witnesses who were testifying to different stories than they'd told at the Calley trial. She wonders: "Had they changed, along with their testimony?" Interesting question. Just the kind of question the reader might like to have answered for him. But finding the answer would mean tracking down the witnesses, talking with them and their families, leaving the courtroom in search of the facts. The reader cannot do that for himself; evidently Mary McCarthy will not do it either, for she provides no further enlightenment on this point. She is a marvelous source of questions: throughout the Vietnam books she asks: Whoever thought of this program? What were things like before? What would officials say about the catastrophe? But she does not attempt to find the answers.

If the mounds of unanswered questions are not to be taken as a sign of laziness, they at least suggest that Mary McCarthy has not fully comprehended that journalism is a serious business. She obviously enjoys being on the scene of the political story of the day, but she feels no compulsion to be there long enough to ask all the questions and find the answers. She frequently expresses pique at the burdensome necessity of actually showing up at the affairs she is to cover. She missed the first week of the Medina testimony because of her husband's vacation plans. She dropped out of the Ervin hearings early because it was time to return to Paris: "Those who watched on television during late September (I was no longer in America) said the low point came . . . ." In the preface to *The Seventeenth Degree*, she says: "The trouble with trying to be a reporter is that events either hurry ahead of you or else lag behind. They do not sit still and wait for you

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to join them like the characters in a novel." Her attitude and performance realize the worst fears of the enemies of the "New Journalism," who predicted that writers who embellished the facts might fail to include the facts at all.

Sometimes the questions go unanswered for a different reason: not that it would take extra legwork, but that she's embarrassed to ask. On arrival in North Vietnam, Mary McCarthy was, she says, confident of her ability to find the truth and bring it home. With passing time, "I found my claim to being a disinterested party starting not exactly to disappear, but to shrink from showing itself, as if ashamed. The Vietnamese, beginning with peasants eagerly showing you where their fields had been bombed, had an earnest, disarming conviction that you would give them total credence. To question facts, figures, catch small discrepancies would be to abuse this open, naive (from a Western point of view) trust." The sensitivity that produced this response is not to be ridiculed, but the role of the tactful guest is not the role of the journalist. The minute you start feeling like anybody's guest, you are dead as a journalist, and that is part of what happened to Mary McCarthy in Vietnam.

The Story She Missed

I came across one of the most puzzling of the unanswered questions when I was re-reading *Vietnam* some time ago. Mary McCarthy ends the book urging the anti-war movement to stop wasting its time talking about "solutions" to the war. Its job, she says, is to make clear to Lyndon Johnson that the war had to stop, and then to leave the details to him and his friends in the Pentagon. As part of this argument she states that "Americans who are serious in opposing the war should be refusing to identify themselves with the U.S. government, even a putative government that would . . . prepare, as they say, to sit the war out." The question here is, what about the author herself? Her husband, James West, was as she wrote those words an American diplomat, and as such more than slightly identified with the American government and its foreign policy. Was he a secret dove? Was she somehow "refusing to identify" herself with him, or he with her? How had she applied the prescription she recommended to others?

I found what I could from the State Department. James R. West, now 59 years old, joined State in the early 1950s, having served for six years in the Air Force (which he left as a major). He has shown some mastery of the art of diplomacy within the State Department, having managed to spend nearly all of the past 20 years stationed in Paris. In 1962 State "seconded," or loaned, him to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, which is also located in Paris; he served there as an information officer. On June 30 of last year he voluntarily resigned from State, but he continues in his OECD position.

The bare bones. Only so much to conclude: That James West had not resigned from the service of his government during the war, but neither had his government fired him for his wife's dissent. There must have been more, but I could not be sure what it was until I read "The Way It Went," the new preface to *The Seventeenth Degree.*

It seems that Mary McCarthy was more aware of the delicacy of her husband's position than any of her wartime writing revealed. Robert Silvers of *The New York Review* had first asked her to go to Vietnam in 1966, by which time she was already

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racked by loathing for the war and abhorrence for the bombing. But she could not go in 1966; it was because of her husband:

"If I went, he said, he would have to hand in his resignation. 'Are you sure?' I said. 'Yes.' He had three children to support, as well as alimony payments to make, and had spent most of his life in government service, first in the Air Force and later with government agencies. 'Well, then, I can't go.' I did not feel he was constraining me, only presenting me with an ineluctable fact. There it was. I could not invest *his* life in my desire to go to Vietnam. . . . There were no bad feelings between us. Rather, the contrary. It was as if my trip was a sacrifice we had made jointly: he, too, had wanted it for me."

One year later Silvers asked her again. Things were different for her husband. He would let her go:

" 'But are you going to resign;' I said. 'Hell, no. They'll have to fire me.' That was the decision he had come to. 'Maybe they won't.' 'Maybe.' "

The most important story of the war is contained in these two conversations. At least half the people in the State Department stood in James West's shoes when he told his wife, in 1966, that he opposed the war but that he wasn't ready to lose his job. By that time Foreign Service Officers everywhere were commenting sourly about the stupidity of the war—commenting, that is, to their friends and their families, and not to those on the outside; *commenting*, rather than jeopardizing their careers. The James West of 1967 was a far rarer case, for he had come nearly the full distance. A year before he, like most of the others, had placed the shackles on himself. Now even though he was not publicly dissenting himself, he had removed the shackles and agreed to take the risk. If Mary McCarthy wanted to understand how the war happened and why appeals to logic and good conscience were not stopping it, *there* was the story for her to tell. She gives it one sentence in *The Seventeenth Degree*: "What had changed was that a whole year had passed and U.S. policy was the same." She might well have given it a book, in which to explore why her husband had changed, what forces had imprisoned him before, why so few others had changed along with him, how more might be set free. These are the very lines of inquiry for which her training as a novelist would have best prepared her; they are, after all, questions of career, motivation, choice. Instead, she charged off to the war zone and wrote *Vietnam* and *Hanoi*.

Black Hats and White Hats

In her eagerness to *participate* by going to Vietnam, Mary McCarthy took the wrong turn at the crucial junction. The worst mistakes she has made since then are precisely those she might have avoided by staying to tell her husband's story. Instead of going to a land she'd never seen and attempting to judge events by the quick glances she allowed herself, she might have stayed with people whose motives she understood *as they understood them*. Clearly no one saw the gnarls of James West's dilemma with more love and toleration than his wife, she realized that while he had been pressed into the service of an end he despised, he had neither lost his humanity nor forfeited her respect. Her understanding was not confined to her husband, but embraced other officials she *knew*. After deciding to go to Vietnam she decided "as a matter of courtesy" that she should pay a call on the late Charles Bohlen, then Ambassador to France and her husband's nominal boss. "For an hour

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we debated about Vietnam. It reminded me of school, when you have to listen respectfully to the principal as she carries out her duty, which is to point out to you the error of your thinking, even though she knows you will do what you have determined to do anyway. Having executed that formality, he became very nice. . . . The best qualities of old-fashioned American representatives abroad were being exhibited in 'Chip' Bohlen's gay and efficient helpfulness."

Knowing these men as she did, Mary McCarthy must have realized that labels slapped on from the outside could be terribly misleading. Bohlen could have been called a tool of the imperialists; her own husband might have been said to have changed from cowardice to courage within a year. In the cases of these, her friends, she could not help but know that the truth was more complicated. She must have been aware of the complexities that made her husband hesitant in 1966 and that bound many of his colleagues long afterwards. She might, if she had tried, have examined these complexities and described them in terms that Bohlen, West, and the thousands of others in their position would have recognized as true, and which, therefore, might have helped them understand exactly how they were trapped and what they had to do to escape.

But she did not do that. Instead, she has dealt exclusively with strangers, and has ended up producing series of political caricatures that ring true to no one. The public officials she describes are often one-dimensional, robot-like figures who march heedlessly forward with large keys labeled "Imperialism" or "Repression" protruding from their backs. It is the old problem again of not asking enough questions, caused this time because Mary McCarthy knows too much before she starts examining her characters. She knows that Vietnam was caused by French-American imperialism, and that My Lai made manifest the fundamental brutality of American life, and that the public ability to absorb the Watergate scandals "can be explained by the residue of guilt left over from Vietnam, guilt unadmitted by the majority and therefore all the more in need of relief." With the motives already supplied, she need not endow her characters with the wrinkles and subtleties of the human world.

The temptation to over-simplify is as dangerous when she raises a hero as when she exposes a villain. In *Mask of State*, she naively builds Sam Ervin into a figure of quite implausible and un-human nobility, instead of recognizing from the beginning that he, like other real people, has his frailties and his blind spots, even though he is on balance one of the better men in public office. So when disappointment hits, it hits her hard, as when Ervin agrees to the Stennis tapes compromise and Mary McCarthy suddenly remembers that Ervin is a "hawk":

"How could this old man, looking benign and dreamy in the Oval Office rogues gallery, have welcomed a Trojan horse into so long and stoutly defended territory? . . . The answer, I am afraid, is that most men have a fatal weakness or—to stay in Troy—an Achilles heel, and Nixon had found Ervin's. Ervin is a hawk. We have forgotten it all in our affection for his love of liberty, Shakespeare, and the Bill of Rights. But Nixon had not. . . . The White House played on the old warrior's patriotic sentiments, emphasizing the need for national unity in the impending showdown. Ervin succumbed. Well, every good man pays for his sins, and Senator Sam paid for a lifetime of being a hawk; he was diminished in the public eye and probably his own. The sudden loss of

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heroic stature made him seem pathetic, a deflated windbag still tiresomely huffing and puffing."

Worse even than describing public officials in terms appropriate only to a high-school civics course or a sermon ("pays for his sins," "heroic stature") is Mary McCarthy's active hostility to those writers who have tried to add just the element that she lacks. Her notorious knife-work on David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest* (included as a bonus essay in *The Seventeenth Degree*) is the clearest illustration.

Rare Compassion

The style of the onslaught is in itself off-putting. Mary McCarthy goes about her work with Halberstam in the fashion of the anti-pornography crusader who provides illustrations at his lectures. She insists again and again that the book is pointless, boring, stupid: "I cannot think who will be benefited by *The Best and the Brightest*"; "there are few disclosures of the ordinary kind, that is of facts not generally known"; "there is nothing surprising in these personal histories"; and "the bewildered demand, 'Why is he writing this book? What is he trying to say?' may become, in the course of pages, 'Why, for God's sake, am I reading it?' " The book's vacuity established, she then goes on to steal all his best yarns and illustrations and sprinkle them throughout her review.

When dealing with the substance of the book she makes clear that she is most angry about its best feature: Halberstam's attempt to get inside the characters and understand how they viewed the maelstrom around them. In fairness to Mary McCarthy, she has not overlooked this accomplishment; indeed, she acknowledges it before dismissing it as trivial: "This kind of understanding, while it allows for the mixture of motives and the conflicts present, no doubt, in everybody, does not do more here, at best, than elicit sympathy for the actors as they looked to *themselves*, rather than as history may look at them" (emphasis in original).

But only by trying to understand people as they understand themselves can a writer ever really hope to reach them. Mary McCarthy does not judge her husband as history will judge him, she did not judge Bohlen that way, and I doubt that she, any more than the rest of us, is able to apply these harsh standards to herself. Yet she dismisses Halberstam's attempts to portray the American officials not as war criminals but as men whom ambition and environment had led to a certain point. She writes off Halberstam's rich, if overwrought, characterization of Robert McNamara by saying: "The Vietnam policy required false figures to sustain it, and he was loyal." As for the motives of the cast as a whole, she has a simpler explanation than Halberstam's, with all its complications and "turning points": "I believe that our investment and markets *are* at stake in Vietnam. Vietnam has been fastened on as a symbol of the rights of U.S. capital to flow freely throughout the globe and return home." This kind of talk would mean nothing to Mary McCarthy if someone said that her husband had not resigned in 1966 because of American markets or the flow of U.S. capital—or that his later conversion mainly depended on those things. In his case, she could presumably recognize the difference between historical abstractions and daily realities. Perhaps because she has seen too little of the people she tries to immobilize within this formula, she can forget that they, no less than her husband, are complicated human beings with parts of them pulling toward honor and parts holding them back. ■

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political book notes

Public affairs books to be published in February

Acts of God, Acts of Man. Wesley Marx. Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, $8.95.

America's Mass Media Merchants. William H. Read. Johns Hopkins, $12.50. A social-sciencey look at the growth of the leading American mass media into multinational corporations and at their effect on world politics. Despite an unfortunate fondness for phrases like "global information elite," Read makes his case fairly well, if perhaps overestimating the importance of the print media relative to that of movies and television. It turns out that American media are a major force worldwide, and that the rest of the world is not entirely happy with that state of affairs.

Calling Dr. Horowitz. Steve Horowitz, Neil Offen. Morrow, $8.95.

Dare To Be Great. Rudy Maxa. Morrow, $8.95. This is the story of Glenn Turner, who sold people the right to sell a product called Koscot Cosmetics. He also sold them the right to sell others the right to sell. If you sold the product, you could make a few cents a sale; if you sold the right to sell, you could make a few thousand dollars per sale; so everyone who bought was really buying the right to sell. Over 1,500 distributorships were sold in New York alone, but only 79 of the buyers made over $5,000. The FTC estimates that throughout the country investors lost $44 million on Koscot; but while they were being swindled, the FTC did nothing. This is a story of greed and government inaction, told with verve. A really good read.

Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood. Kai T. Erikson. Simon & Schuster, $8.95.

Energy: The Continuing Crisis. Norman Metzger. Crowell, $9.95.

Fair Play for Frogs: The Waldie-Frobish Papers. Jerome R. Waldie, Nestle J. Frobish. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, $7.95. In 1961 Jerome Waldie, then a California state assemblyman, later a congressman, introduced a bill making it legal to hunt frogs with a slingshot. This triggered a 15-year correspondence with an eccentric named Nestle J. Frobish, who claimed to be standing up for the rights of frogs. The collection here is supposed to be very witty, but after the first couple of letters the humor fades and it's heavy and repetitive going.

The Female Experience: An American Documentary. Gerda Lerner. Bobbs-Merrill, $10.50.

The Fiscal Crisis of American Cities: Essays on the Political Economy of Urban America with Special Reference to New York. David Mermelstein, Roger Akaly. Vintage, $5.95.

Flight to Mercury. Bruce C. Murray, Eric Burgess. Columbia, $12.95.

Harry Hopkins: A Biography. Henry H. Adams. Putnam, $15.

Housing by People: Toward Autonomy in Building Environments. John Turner. Pantheon, $10/$3.95.

Injustice for All. Anne Strick. Putnam, $8.95. An excerpt appeared in the January issue of *The Washington Monthly*.

Laughing Last: Alger Hiss. Tony Hiss. Houghton Mifflin, $8.95.

Liberty's Chosen Home: The Politics of Violence in Boston. Alan Lupo. Little, Brown, $12.50.

The Life and Death of the Cold War: Selected Studies in Postwar Statescraft. Morton A. Kaplan. Nelson Hall, $17.50. If you believe that the United States eagerly leapt into the Cold War, this book is the kind of cold shower you need.

Murder in Space City: A Cultural Analysis of Houston Homicide Patterns. Henry P. Lundsgaarde. Oxford, $10.95. Lundsgaarde is an anthropologist who, during a temporary academic assignment in Houston, became fascinated with the staggeringly high murder rate there, and he has written a thorough if not gripping book about what

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might be called the culture of murder. His findings are familiar but well told here: urban murder is concentrated in poor center-city areas, and amazingly often is the result of passionate quarrels between relatives, spouses, or friends who have easy access to guns. No better case can be made for gun control.

The Night Watch: Twenty-five Years of Peculiar Service. David Atlee Phillips. Atheneum, $10.95.

Our Appalachia: An Oral History. Laurel Shackleford, Bill Weinberg, eds. Hill and Wang, $12.95.

Pink-Collar Workers: Inside the World of Women's Work. Louise Kapp Howe. Putnam, $8.95.

Pipe Clay and Drill: John J. Pershing, the Classic American Soldier. Richard Goldhurst. Reader's Digest Press, $12.95.

The Plot to Destroy Israel: The Road to Armageddon. Alvin Rosenfeld. Putnam, $8.95.

The Plug-In Drug. Marie Winn. Grossman, $7.95.

The Power Peddlers: How Lobbyists Mold America's Foreign Policy. Russell Warren Howe, Sarah Hays Trott. Doubleday, $12.50. An excerpt appeared in the December issue of *The Washington Monthly*.

Prelude to War. Robert T. Elson. Time-Life, $9.95.

Secret Intelligence in the Twentieth Century. Constantine FitzGibbon. Stein & Day, $10.

200 Years of American Business. Thomas C. Cochran. Basic, $14.95.

Peter Lisagor

Peter Lisagor was a member of our editorial advisory board from our beginning in 1969 until his death in January. As is the case all too seldom with great men, Lisagor was even better in person than in print, partly because his wise, witty, profane conversational style was necessarily edited out of his articles. Out of diffidence we turned to him too little, but whenever we did he was an unfailing source of delight, and we will sorely miss him.

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